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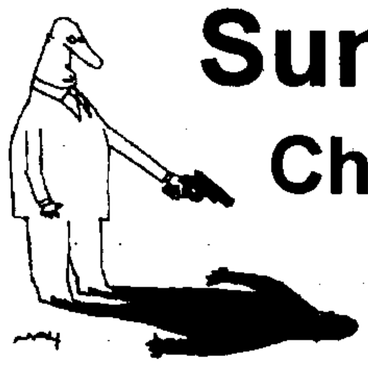

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18

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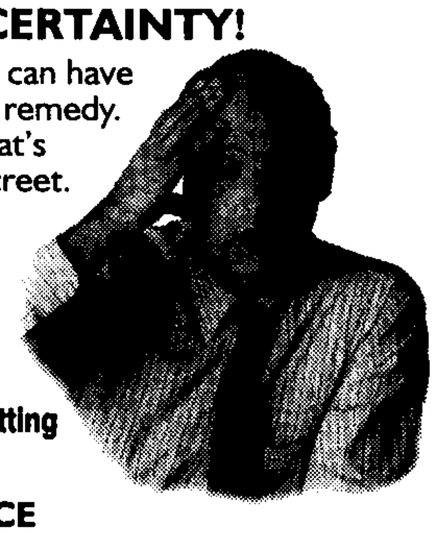

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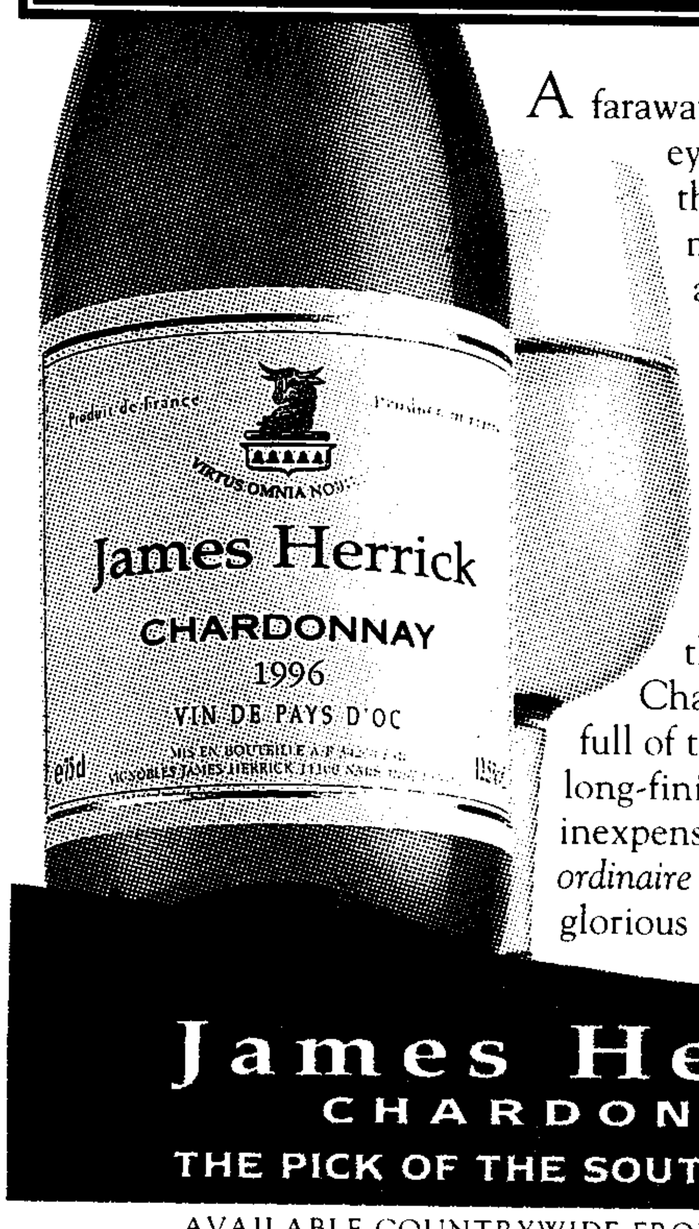

A faraway look comes into people's eyes when mention is made of the South of France. For most, it is the capital of *chic*: a sun-kissed playground of exotic resorts and spectacular scenery studded with ancient vineyards - among them, *La Motte*, *La Boulandière* and *Les Garrigues de Truilhas*, where James Herrick makes the definitive *Midi* Chardonnay. Rich, stylish and full of taste; fresh, yet fruity and long-finishing. And amazingly inexpensive. Why settle for *vin ordinaire* when you can afford the glorious South?

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Very Important Changes to Private Eye Scheduling

Private Eye **is pleased to announce a major shake-up of its scheduling, after six months' consultation with focus groups in all parts of the country.**

As from midnight tonight, the following alterations will apply:

- **Page One will remain in its old position, although it will be extended onto page two.**
- **Page Two will be shortened and moved to its new slot on page eight.**
- **Page Seven is coming to an end, to be replaced by a revamped page ten, which will in future be known by a new title as "Page Nine".**
- **The popular Page Eleven is to be closed down.**
- **Pages Fourteen-Eighteen will be available only on the Internet at www.radiofour.co.uk.**
- **Page Nineteen will split in two. The top half will be available only to readers in Scotland. The bottom half will be available to no one.**

We are extremely keen to know our readers' views on these changes. Please will you fill in the form below as soon as possible.

The new schedule is:

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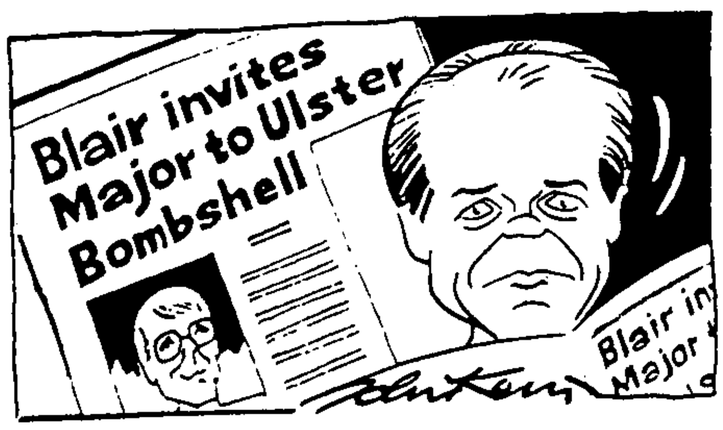

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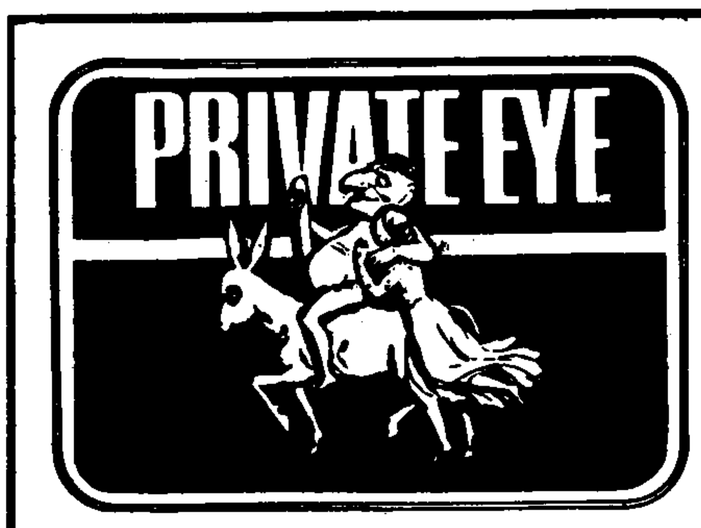


COLOUR SECTION

THERE has been a distressing falling-out between Mohamed Fayed and his erstwhile chums at the *Guardian*.

The Phoney Pharaoh is most upset that the paper has never thanked him for his assistance, and that editor Alan Rubbisher has consistently refused to meet him. Worse still, the paper has had the temerity to print several articles by Henry Porter, Mohamed's chief tormentor at *Vanity Fair* magazine.

And so, in a fit of pique, the World's Worst Egyptian has sent the *Grauniad* a bill for £500,000 to cover his "research expenses" in the Neil Hamilton and Jonathan Aitken cases. The *Guardian*, only too pleased to disprove the allegation that it is in Fayed's pocket, has told the shifty shopkeeper to fugg off.

● *More Street of Shame, page 6*

AMBUSHED on Doncaster station recently by a reporter from the local *Star*, the prime minister said he was "happy" with the new leadership of the borough council.

Malcolm Glover, the new leader, was delighted with the unsolicited testimonial. Mr Glover refuses to disclose the long list of Doncaster councillors who have had to pay back wrongly-claimed expenses. Nor can he confirm or deny the *Eye*'s information that he is on it.

Mr Blair emphasised that "we take very seriously any problems that arise" in Doncaster, but the problems are very serious indeed. For instance, the safe Labour ward of Adwick now has no Labour representatives on the council. The three Adwick councillors elected for Labour were Peter Welsh, who is suspended after unsavoury allegations last July about councillors' relationships with property developers; Mick Collins, who has left the party because he doesn't agree with "new" Labour policies and has been charged with embezzling party funds; and Keith Martin, who somehow forgot to join the party in the first place.

Adwick is in the Doncaster North constituency, whose MP is Kevin Hughes, Tony Blair's loyal junior whip in the Commons. Mr Collins was secretary of Hughes's constituency party, whose chairman, Gordon Gallimore, is also suspended. There is more trouble for Kevin Hughes in Bentley ward, whose former secretary, Peter Birks, is also suspended.

Mr Birks chaired Doncaster's planning committee which gave permission for a highly controversial residential development on green belt land at Branton. When the permission was granted, Mr Birks was living in a spectacular £170,000 house owned by the Branton developer Alan Hughes: a fact he forgot to declare on the council's register of interests.

● *More Rotten Boroughs, page 13*

ONE result of the new emphasis on human rights in Labour foreign affairs has been a drastic shift in the policy of finding places at respectable British universities for officers from the Indonesian armed forces.

The change has specially affected the Kopassus, the Indonesian army's "special forces", who have raped, tortured and murdered their way through East Timor since that country was illegally invaded and occupied by Indonesia in 1975.

The policy shift can be observed most clearly at the Royal Military College at Shrivenham, which is part of Cranfield University. In 1993-94, one Indonesian officer was being trained there. Under the Tories, this was cut to none in 1994-95, none in 1995-96, and none in 1996-97. In 1997-98, under "new" Labour, the number has gone up to 10. Asked why officers are being trained at a British military establishment, Dr John Reid, the very militaristic minister of state for the armed forces, explains: "They are attending a Master of Defence Administration Course in a private capacity."

It is not only at Shrivenham that the authorities are showing a new interest in training the worst elements of the occupying army of East Timor. At Hull University, despite loud student protests, there are 10 more Indonesian army officers on a "security studies" course. At least seven of the 10 are senior men in the Kopassus. Protests about the new policy of welcoming and teaching officers of a brutal and illegal occupying army have not impressed the Labour MP for Hull East, the former enemy of oppression John Prescott.

● *More Footnotes, page 26*

IN a belated attempt to justify its theft of James Hewitt's letters, the *Mirror* claimed that he had been planning to sell them anyway. The source for this story — which was instantly denied by Hewitt's solicitor — was one Peter Trowell, described as a "go-between" and "Mr Fixit" who had been asked by Hewitt to flog the Diana correspondence for £2m.

Though the *Mirror* neglected to mention it, this is the same Peter Trowell who set up the paper's entrapment of young William Straw last Christmas.

Trowell, 43, a former roadie for rock bands, is a sometime conman and jailbird with a long history of dodgy antics. It was while serving time in Ford open prison that he met fellow-crook Darius Guppy, and after their release the gruesome twosome had a conversation in a Chelsea bar about making counterfeit videos to sell in Russia. Unbeknown to Guppy, the chat was secretly tape-recorded — and duly turned up in a Sunday tabloid.

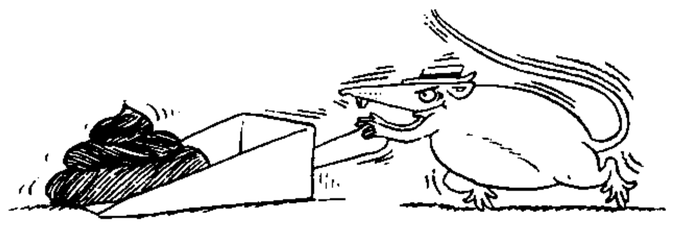
Like Guppy, Trowell is not averse to using violence on those who cross him. On Friday 27 March — the very week when, he claims, he was negotiating with James Hewitt — Trowell's neighbours in Bonham Road, London SW2, saw him launch a violent attack on a man in the street.

The victim was the ex-husband of Trowell's lover, who had just driven 250 miles to take his children out. He had apparently incurred Trowell's wrath by mentioning to the children that "Mr Fixit" had a prison record. And so, oblivious to the tearful screams of the man's 10-year-old son — who witnessed the distressing spectacle of his stepfather beating up his dad — Trowell grabbed the visitor by his lapels, hurled him to the ground and then leapt on top of him, fists flying.

Before the *Mirror* exhausts its stock of epithets for James Hewitt — vile, despicable, loathsome, etc etc — perhaps it should save a few for its own impeccable source.

● *More filth, page 7*

"I got promoted in the reshuffle"



Street of Shame

THE HACKS at the *Daily Mail* have been having problems trying to cover the agreement in Northern Ireland. DON'T LET IT SLIP FROM OUR GRASP **was the *Daily Mail* front page plea on the day of the signing.**

After a weekend's reflection, the *Mail* returned to base with a double-page spread of "outrage" at one of the main points of the agreement: the early release of political prisoners. The list even included Gilbert McNamee, whose conviction for the Hyde Park bombings in 1982 has been referred to the court of appeal by the criminal cases review commission with a strong recommendation that the verdict was wrong.

On the same day (14 April) the *Daily Telegraph* gave pride of columnists' space to Robert McCartney MP, leader and sole Westminster representative of the minuscule UK Unionist Party. McCartney compared the Stormont agreement to Munich in 1938, and bitterly complained about the proposals to change the enormous preponderance of Protestants in the Royal Ulster Constabulary. *Eye* readers will remember Mr McCartney for the vast damages he received when a Northern Ireland newspaper dared, in a gossip paragraph, to allege falsely that he had argued in a tea shop with another Northern Ireland barrister about which of the two should eat the last cream bun. (McCartney later successfully sued the *Eye* and rightfully got £30,000 damages — at least partly because the *Eye* inadvertently described him as a Unionist.)

MOHAMED FAYED's *Punch* magazine has been heavily hyping its new series exposing lax security at British banks. Last week it revealed triumphantly that even Coutts, the queen's bank, had left confidential details of customers' accounts in black rubbish bags outside one of its branches.

Punch's proprietor is well qualified to pontificate on this subject, of course. Seven years ago the Bank of England removed the Phoney Pharaoh from his stewardship of the Harrods Bank after one of his former accountants, Graham Jones, revealed that the Fayeds had "no respect for the restricting nature of Bank of England regulations" and were "no longer fit and proper persons to be controllers of a bank".

IT SEEMS like only yesterday when *Daily Mail* boss Sir David English swore that his newspapers would never again use intrusive paparazzi photos after the untimely death of the Princess of Wales. Yet every Saturday for the past few months the *Mail* has been running Richard Kay's interminable partwork — "Diana: The Untold Story" — complete with page after page of long-lens snaps of the late Queen of Hearts.

Shome mishtake, shurely? Er, probably not.

THE *Eye* office is awash with copies of a "Private & Confidential" memo received by members of the "senior management team" at former hippie Felix Dennis's eponymous trashy magazine publishing company.

The short-trousered 1971 *Oz* trial defendant who wanted to smash the state (*shurely "the straights"? Ed*) — and later made millions out of computer titles and lads' mags — is revealed as a pompous authoritarian who seeks to monitor his staff's every movement.

"If I try to reach you... during normal working hours, and you have not left word on your voicemail, at reception or with someone you have designated... your career prospects might very well be on the line," he thunders.

Like, from stoned freak to control freak! Heavy, man.

***MAIL on Sunday* editor Jonathan Holborow was keen but cautious when he uncovered the fact that foreign secretary Robin Cook was going to get married at Chevening on 19 April.**

He phoned his political editor Peter Dobbie in high excitement. "Check this out!" he barked. "Get hold of Cornwallis!" (Lord Cornwallis is the chairman of trustees at Chevening). Dobbie duly rang Cornwallis, who with great charm and courtesy said he had no idea what the foreign secretary's personal plans were.

An hour later, the foreign office put out a press statement announcing the Cook wedding. The *Mail on Sunday* had lost its scoop. Furious, Holborow phoned Dobbie again. "Why the bloody hell did you tip off Cornwallis?" he shouted. "Because you told me too," was Dobbie's calm response. No more was heard of the matter.

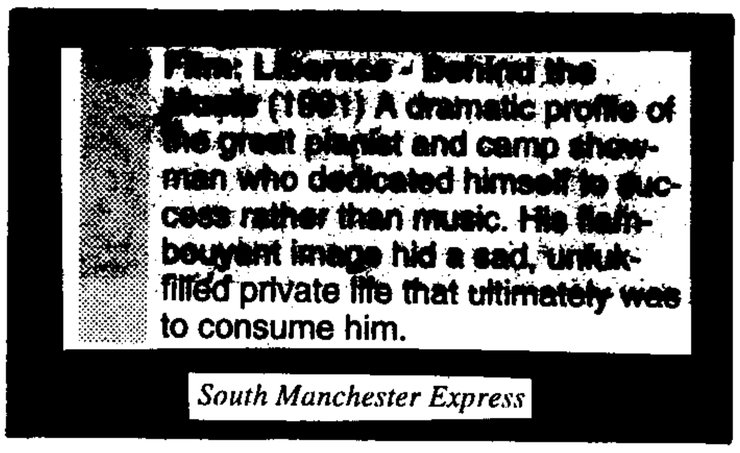
***DAILY MAIL* readers must be confused about their paper's attitude to the sanctity of marriage.**

First, it gave acres of space to comedy producer Harry Thompson's spurned wife Fiona Duff and her "Diary of a Divorce". Then Lynda Lee-Potter's obsession with It wife Della Bovey culminated in the columnist's triumph when Della won back her man from the evil clutches of TV presenter Anthea Turner.

How strange, then, that shortly after the last instalment of the Diary of a Divorce the *Mail* should run a double spread on "Which decade had the best sex?" To put the case for the 90s was one Victoria Coren, lover of... Harry Thompson.

After being asked to commiserate with Fiona Duff, *Mail* readers were treated to Coren's revelation that "TV and film combine to give you the impression that you're awfully dull if you don't whip out the handcuffs and Dairylea on the first date". What's more, Coren disclosed, "the first flush of sexual involvement with someone you're falling for is wonderful: nowadays we can have those 'first times' over and over again".

Any *Mail* reader sick of nonentity wife/mistress stories is advised to switch paper. But not to the *Sun*, of course, which is exclusively running "Della's story" — by one Adam Lee-Potter.


Film: Liberace - Behind the Music (1991) A dramatic profile of the great playlist and camp showman who dedicated himself to success rather than music. His flamboyant image hid a sad, unfulfilled private life that ultimately was to consume him.
South Manchester Express

***DAILY Telegraph* pundit Stephen Glover has been poached to write a column for the *Daily Mail*. But this leaves one small item of unfinished business.**

For the past couple of years Glover has also written a press column for the *Spectator*, which is owned by the Telegraph Group. Eager to have exclusive rights to Glover, Associated Newspapers chairman Sir David English came up with a brainwave: why not write about the press for the London *Evening Standard*'s media section?

As it happens, Glover used to pen just such a column for the *Standard* until Max "Hitler" Hastings sacked him — since when Glover has used his *Spectator* slot to ridicule his ex-editor.

Nevertheless, as a military buff Hitler knows the virtue of obeying superior officers; and so, with gritted teeth, he has accepted English's order to reemploy his tormentor. But will Glover wish to place his elegant prose at the mercy of an editor who cordially loathes him? Watch this space.

***NEW STATESMAN* editor Ian Hargreaves' announcement that he was leaving to take a journalism lectureship in Cardiff and another job as occasional presenter for Radio 4's *Analysis* programme, has set tongues a-wagging.**

Whoever inherits from Hargreaves has a tough job. Despite the £2 to £3m invested by the proprietor, treasury minister Geoffrey Robinson, the *Staggers* has only managed to put on a 5,000 to 7,000 increase in circulation. And should Geoff eventually be reshuffled, or even shuffled out of government, will the great man continue to be quite so generous?

OBNK

"The events in Hyde Park yesterday have already passed into history... But how did the *Independent on Sunday*'s campaign to decriminalise cannabis come to make history? Three factors are responsible for propelling the campaign so far. Firstly the support of readers... Secondly the way in which the debate was so enthusiastically taken up... Thirdly the persistence of Rosie Boycott, the editor."

— Report on the history-making protest against dope laws, *Independent on Sunday*

***DAILY Mail* theatre reviewer Michael Coveney, who says he is writing a "critical biography" of Andrew Lloyd-Webber, gave a taste of what we can expect in his newspaper last week.**

Not content with a gushing review of Lloyd-Webber's 50th birthday concert, he filled the *Mail*'s leader-page with a brown-nosed tribute to the "brilliant" and "inventive" composer of such timeless masterpieces as, er, *Starlight Express*.

Oddly enough, Coveney omitted one detail: his wife, Sue Hyman, is the theatrical PR woman responsible for promoting... *Starlight Express*.

FADING rock rag *NME*, which recently devoted an issue to condemning "new" Labour for, among other things, being soft on the likes of Geoffrey Robinson and Bernie Ecclestone, knows a thing or two itself about old pals' acts.

The *NME* of 11 April carried a two-page spread about a new beat combo called Campag Velocet, which has largely been ignored by the rest of the music press. "In a week's time," enthuses live reviews editor James Oldham, "they release their second astonishing EP on the bedroom-based Rabid Badger label."

NME omits to mention that the bedroom in which this new Oasis's record label is based just happens to be that of one Simon Williams, whose day job is as a staff writer on, er, *NME*.

WHEN he relaunched the *European* earlier this year, editor-in-chief Andrew "Brillo Pad" Neill told *UK Press Gazette* that he wanted it to be read only by "movers and shakers". If the circulation fell, therefore, he would be very pleased, since it would mean that "retired schoolteachers in the Dordogne" and similar riff-raff had cancelled their orders.

He has succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. Three months ago, the *European* was selling 38,000 copies in the UK and another 15,000 in the rest of Europe. Today, thanks to Brillo's inspiring leadership, UK sales are down to about 15,000. Figures for the continent are as yet unknown, but certain to be down because of the stridently anti-European line Neill has imposed on the mag.

AWARDS NEWS

CHRIS MANN, editor of London radio station News Direct, proudly stepped up to receive one of the Commission for Racial Equality's "Race in the Media" awards last month for his station's coverage of the case of Stephen Lawrence, the black teenager murdered by a racist gang in south London in 1993.

Why were colleagues at the station so cross about this? The most obvious reason was that when the award-winning programmes were broadcast Mann was actually on leave. The second reason was that the hacks believed that if Mann had been at work then then the Lawrence story would not have been covered at all. When News Direct ran a story about Wayne Douglas, whose death in police custody sparked the Brixton riot of 1995, Mann, who was on a day off, rang in to berate hacks that he didn't want "these sort of stories" on the station. When the *Daily Mail* ran its campaign naming Stephen Lawrence's alleged killers, Mann remarked that the story was of "no interest". Mann's career at Sky TV came to a halt after a brawl with fellow-presenter Scott Chisholm. Let us hope there is no such unpleasantness over this award.

"I'd be 63 today, had I lived"

RED faces at Tesco, whose family-loving image has not been enhanced by its heartwarming "Baby of the Year contest".

With the *Gloucestershire Echo*, the supermarket chain published a big supplement of the county's bonniest babies, and readers were invited to phone an 0891- number followed by the digits printed next to the baby for whom they wanted to vote.

Some baby lovers got a rude surprise, however, when they rang up to vote and were put through to Miss Whiplash-style sex-lines, dating agencies and chat lines instead.

SPORTING DEATH

AFTER 140 years of publication, the *Sporting Life* will close next month and be merged into the rival *Racing Post*, making many of its 85 staff redundant. This follows Mirror Group's purchase of the *Post* last December for a nominal £1 from the Makhtoum family.

Mirror Group boss David Montgomery and his henchman, *Sporting Life* director David Annat, assured staff at the time that the *Life* would be converted into a general sports daily, with the *Post* concentrating on the gee-gees. But after a series of disastrous dummies and minimal investment, Kelvin Mackenzie had a heated debate with the hapless stand-in editor of the proposed new paper, Alan Ruddock, who promptly quit. Its projected launch date of May has been put back to the end of 1998 — if ever.

Until Annat's appointment in 1994 the *Sporting Life* enjoyed a 70-30 market share over the *Post*. For decades Britain's 9,000 bookmakers used the *Life* as wallpaper, with racecards and form kept separate so it could be pasted on the walls. Most betting shops bought two copies daily, which formed a significant part of the circulation.

One of Annat's first brainwaves was to redesign the paper, running form on the back of the racecards, allegedly to make it a more convenient for punters but in reality to force bookmakers to buy more copies. The Big Three betting chains were livid and demanded that it go back to the old format. Annat refused.

The *Racing Post* seized the opportunity to produce its own betting shop-only edition — and Annat was obliged to follow suit, thereby wiping out the annual £2m profit at a stroke. In classic Mirror Group style, it was the staff who had to pay the price for managerial incompetence: 30 were made redundant while Annat received a promotion and pay rise.

Mirror Group claimed last week that the new version of the *Racing Post* will be staffed by a mixture of *Life* and *Post* people. In fact it will be dominated by former *Post* staff for the simple reason they were paid less than their *Life* equivalents — though they had better redundancy agreements. The *Life* hacks were therefore cheaper to get rid of and more expensive to keep. Because of the specialised nature of their job, few are likely to find other employment. Meanwhile, despite their appalling record and a crashingly awful share performance, Messrs Annat and Montgomery live on.

HACKWATCH

TONY BLAIR

THE most prolific journalist in Britain, amazingly enough, is a part-time amateur. Since the general election, Tony Blair has written "exclusively" for every national newspaper, chronicling the minutest details of his life with a solipsistic fascination that suggests a budding William Leith or Katharine Flett — and uttering vacuous banalities of which even a Peter McHackey might be ashamed. Here are recent highlights from the new World's Worst Columnist...

1 January: While basking on his holiday beach, Tony Blair "sends a message to *Sun* readers from the Seychelles". He reveals that 1997 was a momentous year "for Britain, for the Labour Party, and obviously for me personally"; and in 1998 things can only get better. "In the end, though, that may be less to do with politicians than with England and Scotland's footballers. To them, to you, I wish a happy New Year."

15 January: Back to work. "I never said modernising our country was going to be easy," Tony informs *Mirror* readers. Nevertheless, "we have to change. We cannot sit back and do nothing."

5 February: Tony has been to America. "Before my departure to the United States," he reveals proudly in an exclusive article for the *Daily Telegraph*, "I did a series of interviews with the US media."

8 February: Further details of life at the top, in an exclusive article for the *Mail on Sunday*. "Prime Ministers have to spend a lot of their time on international issues, as I have been doing in recent days. But I never lose sight of the people who elected me... So yesterday it was Washington. Today it is Scarborough."

12 February: There's no let-up in the hectic schedule. "This morning, I visited Rosetta primary school in Newham," Tony announces in a leader-page article for the London *Evening Standard*. "Nobody said it would be easy. But we are making a difference. Step by step, we are making Britain better. As promised."

15 February: Writing "exclusively for the *Express*", Tony recalls "the feeling of pride when I visited Sheffield recently to meet young people". Then he held a reception in Downing Street this week at which employers signed up for the New Deal. "But as I signed them up, it struck me that I should be signing one myself on behalf of Downing Street where I am the boss." The New Deal, you see, is "New Labour at work. Government, business and the people all working together."

20 February: "Nobody is more moved than I am when I read of Iraqi children starving or left in pain through lack of medicine," Blair writes exclusively in the *Sun*. "After all, I'm not just a politician, I am a father with children of my own." And so, to help the suffering Iraqi children, he is preparing to bomb them.

11 March: Tony Blair isn't just a politician and a father. As he writes "exclusively for the *Mirror*", he was once a boy. "I watched the 1966 World Cup in a bar while on a family holiday in France. That made it all the more memorable for a 13-year-old lad who was mad keen on sport." And, bless him, he's still a footie-crazy lad at heart, recalling other memorable moments: "Lineker's goals in Mexico, Gazza's tears in Italy, the brilliance of his goal against Scotland in Euro '96, the despair of the penalty shoot-outs..." This is why, before the election, he promised to support a bid to hold the 2006 World Cup in Britain. "And, like everything else, I meant what I said. Step by step, we are delivering on our promises... And I believe that message is being understood more and more throughout the world."

18 March: Top commentator Tony Blair delivers an exclusive assessment of the budget in the *Daily Mail*. "Of course, we are still less than a year into government, and change takes time. I feel the frustration of those who say 'Why isn't the NHS, or our schools, or the transport system, all sorted yet?' " Don't despair, he advises: "Steadily, surely, step-by-step, we are delivering... We will do it all and more. Believe me." And he won't rest until the whole country is, er, sorted.

22 March: The prime minister "writes exclusively for the *Sunday People* on his ambitious vision for the future of Britain". And what a vision it is: "As far as you can go. Right to the top, if you can. To fulfil your ambitions. To turn your dreams into reality." To see what he means, one need only study the cabinet: "When I look around, I see John Prescott. As working-class as they come, and now deputy prime minister. There's Jack Straw, brought up on a tough Essex council estate. Now he is home secretary." And what about Derry Irvine? Here's a man "from a very modest background" who rose to the top "through his own efforts and talent" and "has refurbished his official apartments". Yes, dreams can come true. "That's how it should be in politics, business and every other aspect of our national life."

29 March: A lot of ungrateful rock stars have been slagging off the government, Tony notes in the *Sunday Times*. "I think they are wrong," he writes. "But I am relaxed about criticism. The important point is not their politics, but the fact that they are part of a new and exciting cultural renaissance in this country." Still, he doesn't care for cynicism about Cool Britannia. "I don't know why we have to be embarrassed about Britain's success. I'm not. I love it."

30 March: "I'm no information technology expert," Tony admits in the *Independent*, but people who know about these things say the Millennium Bug could play havoc with computers — even "the one on which I'm writing this"! Don't worry, though: "Britain is leading the way... Just as we have taken action on education, health, crime and jobs to ensure that, step by step Britain is getting better, we are taking action on the Millennium Bug." Sorted.

3 April: "I want Britain to be seen as a vibrant, modern place," Tony writes excitedly in the *Daily Mail*. "This was all brought home to me yesterday at the historic meeting with the prime minister of China, Zhu Rongji. Here is a prime minister, a moderniser if ever I met one, who is pushing through a programme of reform..." And, one might add, locking up dissidents. But let's not be negative. "Let's be patriotic about this, let's shout about it. Britain is blessed with creativity, innovation, humour and imagination."

7 April: "At times, British politicians have had a reputation for finger-wagging," Tony observes in an exclusive article for the *Independent*. He maintains this fine old tradition, ordering "the sceptics and doomsters" to stop whingeing. New Labour wants to make people "happier and richer", and "this is not simply a vague opportunity or aim. We are actually doing it." Great! And let's give credit where it's due, OK? "Politicians make it happen. And we already are." Lovely.

MYSTERY STORY

ALARM bells are ringing at Downing Street following the discovery that certain tabloids have acquired tapes and photographs featuring one of the prime minister's dearest friends and counsellors.

On the morning of 6 February, while his wife was away, the guru in question was visited at his house by a woman with whom he had an affair many years ago. After reminiscing about old times, the pair went upstairs to renew their acquaintance more intimately. The sage hoped the smack of firm discipline might revive his wilting libido. She duly obliged by bending him over her knee. "You've been a naughty boy," she declared, "and you haven't had enough punishment, have you?"

"No, no, not yet!" gasped the excited Blairite, begging for more.

After plenty more in the same vein, the couple departed for lunch at a Chinese restaurant.

Little did Blair's chum realise that a tabloid photographer was lurking outside — and that, thanks to a miniature recorder which had somehow been smuggled into the house, the entire proceedings had been taped.

Of course no blame attaches to Blair himself, who knew nothing about it. Still, to be on the safe side, he should advise his speechwriters to go easy on the "family values" stuff for a while — lest he give the tabloids the perfect public-interest justification for revealing how at least one member of his circle puts those values into practice.

WHILE the pound continues to soar, threatening a return to recession and widespread job losses in manufacturing, chancellor Gordon Brown wrings his hands. He is increasingly powerless to do anything because one of his first acts was to hand the power to set interest rates to Eddie George and the Bank of England.

Until now Brown has not only failed to use his reserve powers to intervene against interest rate rises, but at the last meeting of the bank's monetary committee, three of his four appointees actually voted for another interest rate hike. The day was only saved by the casting vote of, er, Eddie George.

Giving extra powers to the bank may have looked like a clever move at the time, but it is likely to result in a running battle between Brown — who now admits the high pound is a "problem" — and the prime minister, who originally backed Brown's abdication to the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street.

Blair is beginning to get jittery that Cool Britannia risks becoming Stone-Cold Britannia if recession sets in. So watch out for the "sources close to..." who will shortly be whispering to *Sunday Times* hacks that Tony is unhappy with Gordon's handling of the economy.

NEW Labour's fear of Ken Livingstone knows no bounds. Having spent months running through a wish-list of no-hopers to stop the People's Ken from presenting himself as a potential mayor of London (see *Eye passim*), Peter "Mandy" Mandelson revealed to his "captured castles" in the Commons press gallery that "Chris Smith was just the man for the job".

Then, more in desperation than hope, sports minister Tony Banks was paraded as the candidate who could stop Red Ken. In the meantime "new" Labour's Millbank teenies have not been slow to telephone big name Labour supporters and luvvies, warning them not to offer any support to Leninspart.

DAYS after denouncing reports that Tony Blair had telephoned Italian prime minister Romano Prodi to test the water for Rupert Murdoch as "trivia", Tony Blair's office let it be known that the prime minister was "fully behind" imprisoned *Coronation Street* star Deirdre Rachid.

"In a private capacity," it was reported, "Tony Blair wanted it to be known that he thought that Deirdre had been treated unjustly." But what Mr Blair and dim-witted Deirdre backer, New Labour boy Fraser Kemp, did not know, was that the AEU engineering union was busy balloting its members at Granada Television, where *Coronation Street* is made, on industrial action over the company's plans to dispose of a number of their members' jobs. Deirdre could be one of Her Majesty's guests for a great deal longer if the lights go out over the *Street*.

Number crunching

£60,000

- cost of Lord Irvine's new wallpaper
- cost of Lord Irvine's new "media minder" who is being engaged in order to restore his public image after the publicity surrounding the cost of his new wallpaper

TONY BLAIR's paranoia about any signs of deviation or dissent among his 417 "new" Labour MPs was made manifest last year with the introduction of MPs' "contracts" which bound members to a programme of obedience to HQ.

These have now been updated, providing a "framework within which MPs and their CLPs are expected to work".

Tasks include spending at least one evening a week and half a day each weekend "in contact with the voters"; contacting 100 households a week by telephone; spending at least two hours a week knocking on doors, plus two weeks in the recess; sending a birthday card to every 18-year-old in the constituency; hosting social events for new party members twice a year, etc, etc.

A letter to MPs tells them that by signing up they are expressing "goodwill" and that their progress will be "monitored". A sinister clause says "the local party and MP also agree to work cooperatively with head office, regional office and local organising staff to achieve the programme". MPs are also "invited" to subscribe to a daily bulletin from the party's media monitoring service — a snip at £250 a year plus VAT.

Clearly the idea is that MPs are kept so busy door-knocking, sending out birthday cards and staying "on message" via the media monitoring unit that they don't have the time or energy to think about anything else — least of all politics.

LABOUR's support in Scotland has slumped badly, according to a poll commissioned by the Glasgow-based *Herald*. And its narrow lead there could be further eroded when the limited powers contained in the Scotland bill are made clear to those who hailed devolution as the way to full independence.

The bill's schedule five makes clear that the Scottish parliament at Holyrood "shall have no power over"... pensions; abortion; broadcasting; road transport; shipping; telecommunications; weights & measures; employment; railways; airlines; the Crown Estate Commission; "all fiscal, economic and monetary policy"; natural resources (Westminster reserves the right to control the "exploitation of, the ownership of, and the exploration for North Sea gas and oil"); the issue of banknotes (including Scottish notes); banking regulations; most aspects of Scotland's minerals; electricity generated by nuclear power; trade & industry; the transport of radioactive material; drugs; immigration; what is "an official secret"; firearms; film censorship; betting, gaming and lotteries; trout & salmon farming; the civil service; the defence of the realm; national security; social security; foreign affairs; and relations with the European Union.

Perhaps "new" Labour should scribble across its devolution handouts the axiom of the late Enoch Powell that "power devolved is power retained".

MORE trouble for Labour in Scotland, where Labour MPs are furious that Tony Blair has rubber-stamped the appointment of Muir Russell as permanent under-secretary of state at the Scottish office on £130,000 a year.

Russell was a driving force behind the poll tax in Scotland and, according to John Hume Robertson, Labour MP for East Lothian, one of the main Scottish office civil servants who helped rubbish the then Labour opposition over the tax in the mid-80s when Thatch introduced it.

This is not the only potentially awkward appointment Dewar has made, however. He recently took on a new communications chief — Scottish Television producer Paul McKinney, a one-time researcher for Gordon Brown — whose arrival some Labour party members have welcomed with trepidation.

McKinney takes up his new job as Labour and the Scottish National Party stand neck and neck in the polls. He has already made an inauspicious start, acknowledging that he voted SNP at the last election in protest at Govan Labour candidate Mohammed Sarwar, even though he was a member of Govan Labour party. Given that Professor Steve Bruce of Aberdeen University was expelled from the party for voting LibDem to oust a Tory MP, "new" Labour's pick 'n' mix expulsion policy looks slightly hypocritical.

FIONA JONES, "new" Labour MP for Newark, is being dragged into a civil war within her local Labour party much as John Prescott has been in Hull.

Jones won the party's nomination to fight the Nottinghamshire seat after beating off a challenge from rival Labourite Gill Dawn, leader of the local council.

Dawn has recently been suspended from the Newark Labour group after receiving bottles of perfume from a local developer. Her supporters, apparently trying to deflect attention from her plight, have now turned the spotlight on her former rival, Jones, claiming that the authorities should look at Jones's general election expenses which, they claim, were fiddled. Some local Labour party members have kicked up such a fuss Inspector Knacker has now stepped in. But how serious are the expenses-fiddling allegations against the Labour MP?

As the pro-Dawn lobby knows, it is very easy to taint almost any winning candidate with such smears. Candidates are not allowed to spend more than £8,500, but most spend as close to that as possible. Jones's enemies insist that the MP should now account for the cost of telephone canvassing which the Labour party carried out in Newark on behalf of its national campaign — even though that canvassing didn't mention Jones by name. This would take Jones over the spending limit.

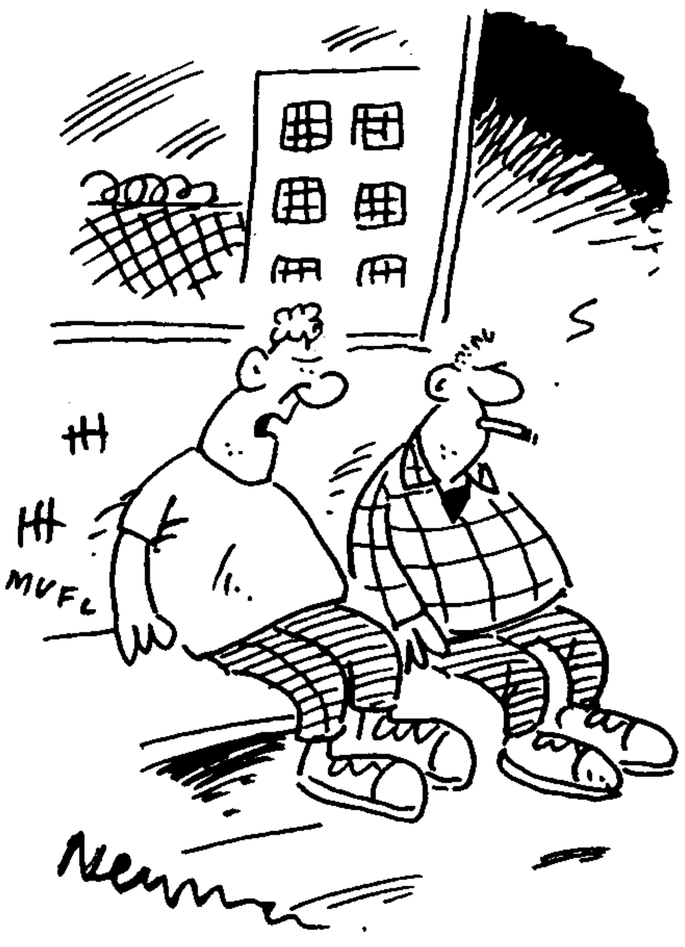
Then there are the "Vote Labour" placards by the A1 which were put up by a local businessman who switched from the Tories and wanted to advertise his conversion. Since he paid for the boards himself they don't need to be added to Jones's bill. More serious are allegations that — shock, horror — Jones's supporters used the photocopier at the town hall and there was an artificially low rent set on Labour's campaign HQ on the High Street.

While the Labour in-fighting continues, Knacker has raided the town hall and made off with several piles of documents.

AS PART of the "modernising britain" (sic) series of Fabian pamphlets, Liverpool Garston Labour MP Maria Eagle lambasts her party for maintaining a "traditional male culture".

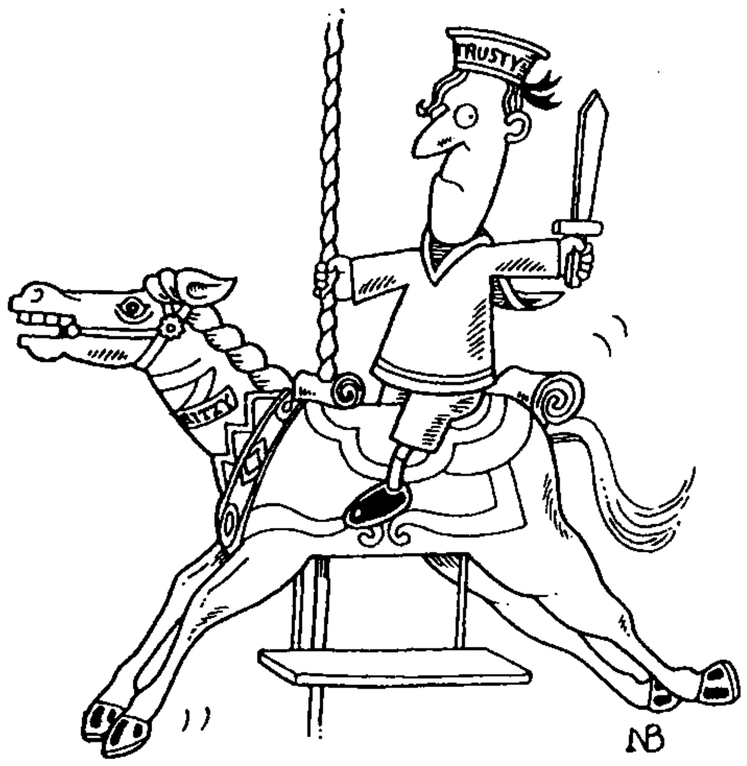
In the introduction to *High Time or High Tide for Labour Women*, Eagle gushes ecstatically over "the photograph of Tony Blair surrounded by new Labour women MPs" which was "one of the most vivid and enduring images of the 1997 general election".

Another enduring image in the unhappy months that followed was that of Maria Eagle trooping in behind the government to support cuts in child benefit. And another image was that of the former leftwing Liverpool solicitor (and twin of junior environment minister Angela Eagle), maintaining a Trappist silence while a member of the statutory instruments committee that was investigating various cuts.



"After the College of Crime, I'm hoping to go to the University of Life Sentence"

NEW OLD SAYINGS



Great oafs from little Aitkens grow

PRESSURE from MPs with trade union sympathies is being put on cabinet members to throw out a suggestion from the Law Commission that would stop those suffering from long-term industrial diseases seeking compensation.

The commission has put forward a little-noticed consultation paper which proposes, among other things, a 30-year limit on legal action for personal injury. This has appalled health and safety professionals, who point out that many asbestos-related diseases can take more than 30 years to become apparent.

ENERGY minister John Battle, normally happy and affable, launched an extraordinarily bitter attack while giving evidence to a Commons standing committee.

He praised the *Times* and then said: "I am sometimes excoriated in another publication — do we call it a newspaper? — *Private Eye*, for being too green and too keen on renewable energies. I am keen to see them developed." Whatever is he going on about?

No such allegation has been printed — just the opposite, in fact. Is he succumbing to the persecution mania which can afflict those working inside the monster department of trade and industry?

WILLIAM Hague and a large retinue of Tory grandees turned up at the Oxo Tower two weeks ago the celebrate the wedding of Hague's speechwriter, George Osborne, to the lovely Frances Howell, daughter of former minister Lord (David) Howell. A splendid time was had by all.

Well, almost all. Bruce "Brute" Anderson, the burly and bibulous political correspondent of the *Spectator*, was so overwhelmed by the occasion — or perhaps by the gratis champagne — that he became ever more tired and emotional until, with a loud thud, he passed out altogether.

'Backbiter'

EYE TOLD YOU SO

IN JULY 1995 the *Eye* predicted that closure of blood centres in Oxford and Liverpool would have catastrophic effects, obliging the blood service to move frozen plasma around the motorway system rather than keeping it on hand locally.

Despite claims that the National Blood Authority would save £10m, the *Eye* revealed that an internal report put the saving at just £380,000, and that nearly £1.5m had been spent on consultants to achieve this.

Health secretary Frank Dobson has now sacked Sir Colin Walker OBE, head of the accident-prone authority, following a report which contains "a damning indictment of the National Blood Authority's treatment of the Liverpool blood centre and the clinicians it serves".

Why wasn't Walker sacked earlier by the Tories? Certainly not because he's spent 20 years chairing the Conservative Party's Constituency Associations.

NOOKS and CORNERS

CURIOUS document reaches me concerning the sale of what is left of Crawford Priory in Fife. Readers may recall that this handsome early Gothic Revival house by James Gillespie Graham is now a ruin (*Eye* 918), having been neglected for years by its owner, the Lord Crawford of Cults. However, Historic Scotland has been disobliging enough to oppose the total demolition of the building, so now, by direction of Crawford Priory Ltd, Messrs Gillespie Macandrew, solicitors, are offering the place for sale on condition that the west and south wings are restored as a single domestic residence.

This document suggests that the vendors are not frightfully keen on seeing Crawford Priory restored. Only 1.5 acres is offered with the ruin, which is in the middle of agricultural land, and a deposit of £120,000 is demanded over and above the sale price, only to be returned if a single dwelling house is completed within four years. Oddest of all is the condition that "the name of the house must be agreed with the sellers. Under no circumstances will the names Crawford [or Crawfurd], Cults or Castle be included in the name or postal address."

So who is going to spend a great deal of money restoring an historic building only to call the result *Mon Repos* or *Dundemolishin*? More to the point, why are Messrs Crawford Priory Ltd so very keen to eliminate these ancient and significant names from the map of Scotland and thus from historical consciousness? Could it be that My Lord Crawford of Cults is a little ashamed of the way he has treated his ancestral home? Surely not.

ANOTHER story that rumbles on is the case of the fishermen's sheds at Sheringham in Norfolk (Eyes passim).

Sheringham town council, aided and abetted by North Norfolk district council, still wants to replace these structures with a new lifeboat museum cleverly designed in the style of a Tesco supermarket, even though the sheds are authentic relics of the fishing village which Sheringham once was and are among the few significant historic buildings in the town's conservation area.

This gratuitous vandalism in the name of heritage has, however, been thwarted by the decision of the (former) department of the environment to place an "article 14" direction on the site, thus preventing demolition.

Meanwhile, the Sheringham Preservation Society has come up with a sensible plan to convert the existing sheds into a fishing heritage museum, incorporating the town's Henry Upcher lifeboat. The article 14 direction has been lifted in respect of this scheme, which now has planning permission. However, implementation of a sane solution is precluded by the fact that the sheds are owned by Sheringham town council and North Norfolk district council persists in favouring its pet lifeboat museum scheme — even though English Heritage has reiterated its opinion that "the existing buildings on the site make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Sheringham Conservation Area, and we see no reason to overturn the presumption against their demolition".

Meanwhile the old and empty fishermen's sheds continue to rot, and the district council has stated that it will not arrange for repairs to be carried out. Yet this is the same local authority that recently fined Mrs Mary Edwards, a trained horticulturalist, £400 for pruning a sycamore tree in her own garden. A pity these ferocious bureaucratic guardians of our natural environment cannot care for the conservation area in Sheringham with equivalent zeal.

'Piloti'

MORE COOK-UPS

Foreign Office Special

TROUBLE is brewing in the gloomy corridors of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in King Charles Street for newly-wed foreign secretary Robin Cook. The irascible Scot should think about buying a bullet-proof vest when he returns from honeymoon.

Irritation in the ranks over the foreign secretary's confrontational manner was quickly reflected in a series of leaks to the press which must have come from well-placed insiders. Gaynor Regan only hit the news after an anonymous tip-off; and we now also know that Cook ordered a government car to transfer him between Heathrow terminals, is allegedly referred to as "Mr A4" because he won't read briefing papers more than a page long and once mispronounced the Italian foreign minister's first name so badly no one knew who he was referring to.

This is all very embarrassing, but Cook should be paying close attention elsewhere. Seasoned FCO watchers are increasingly bemused by the apparent inability of one of the world's top foreign ministries to keep its man out of trouble. Suspicions that Cook is being hung out to dry by his own side, which first emerged during last year's India-Pakistan disaster, hardened after the recent fiasco in Israel.

Jewish community leaders say Cook is still apologising for the havoc he wrought, but a closer look at the doomed visit to the Jewish settlements at Har Homa shows he has much to be unhappy about. Even though the FCO's top echelons must know that a tetchy, inexperienced and fundamentally uninterested minister needs careful handling, Cook was allowed to stumble from one gaffe to the next.

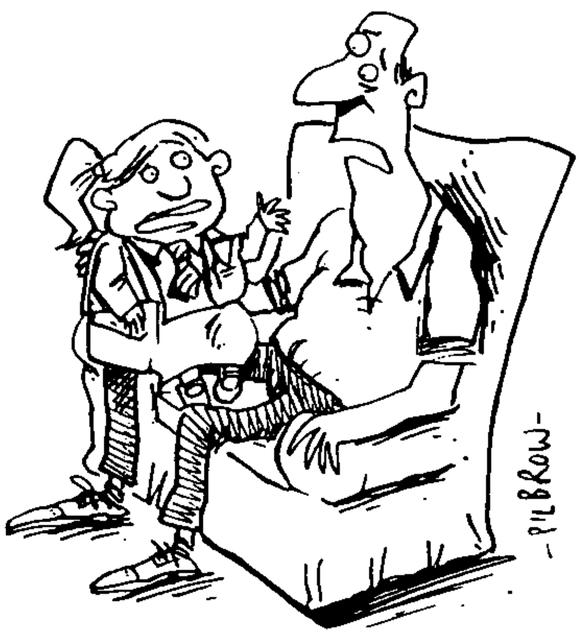
He originally planned to visit Har Homa with a senior Palestinian official, but this was suddenly cancelled "for operational reasons", with FCO officials dismissing any talk of concessions or climbdowns. In fact, the Israelis did demand the Palestinian official be ditched and the FCO simply caved in. Encouraged by this show of weakness, the Israelis then insisted Cook should be briefed on site by one of their cabinet ministers. The FCO agreed, although this raised very awkward questions about whether Britain would thereby be implicitly recognising Israel's 1967 annexation of East Jerusalem. Hardly believing their luck, Netanyahu's team then said Cook should not be briefed by anyone else on site — ruining the entire original premise of the visit — and our proud boys rolled over yet again.

Dirty deals like these are part and parcel of diplomacy and are usually kept secret with lashings of positive spin applied. But in this case British ambassador David Manning was inexplicably allowed on to the podium at a press conference to tell the inside story of the concessions, effectively broadcasting to the entire world that, however tough they talk, the Brits crumple under pressure.

By this time Netanyahu had cancelled an official dinner in Cook's honour, closing the jaws of a trap which any self-respecting Middle East veteran should have seen from the start. If the foreign office seriously thinks it did its best over Har Homa there are some dark days ahead for British diplomacy.

"For someone aspiring to play a role in the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, the British foreign secretary made every possible mistake," crowed the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Aharanot*. "In future, these mistakes will be taught in schools for diplomats."

Humiliating words, but not far off the mark. If Robin Cook were a fund manager, City analysts would by now be asking awkward questions about underperforming assets.



"Is this birds and bees chat going to take long? I'm late for my pre-natal class"

Rupert Murdoch
(Birmingham Media Conference)

Top 100 TV Programmes Of 1997
(Broadcast Magazine)

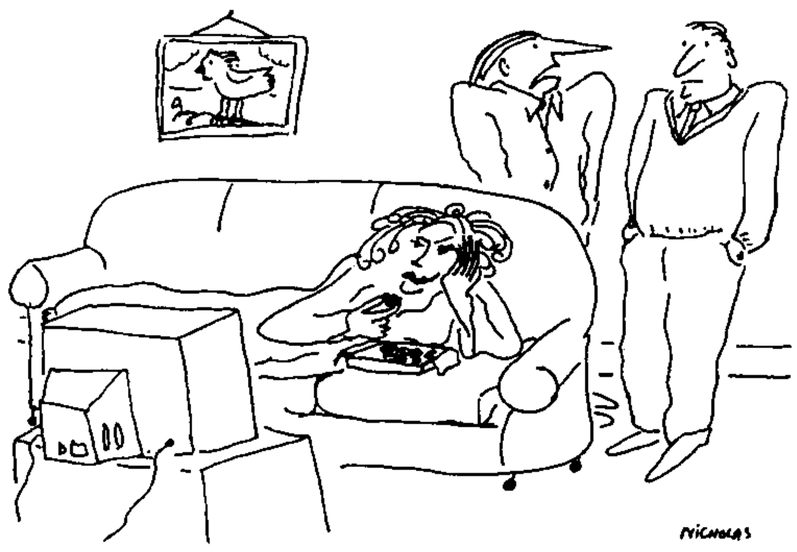
LAST week Rupert Murdoch made a speech attacking the European television industry. In general it was the usual stuff. Through the licence fee in Britain and other regulation, and public service cooperation in Europe, the market was "cosy" and "protectionist". State-subsidised European telly companies formed themselves into a consortium and bid against Murdoch for sporting rights. These were anti-competitive practices.

On this occasion there was also, however, a new theme. The Australian who became an American for business reasons and bought a Hollywood studio, mocked the suggestion of other delegates that American products were swamping European culture. There was no "Coca Cola-nisation" of Europe, Murdoch insisted. While it was true that much American work was exported to other countries, it was important to realise that Hollywood was a European creation. The American film industry had been built up by European immigrants.

Well, you hardly know where to start. If Fox or Sky One ever want to do a remake of Pinocchio, they need go no further than their owner for someone to model the long nose.

For Murdoch — a man who uses the profits from one part of his empire to support unfeasibly low pricing in other parts — to accuse European television of anti-competitive practices is rich even from him. The truth is that the European Broadcasting Union cooperation is a desperate attempt by terrestrial broadcasters to compete even slightly with the riches Murdoch can deploy in bidding wars through his cross-subsidy tactics. Posing as an obsessive free marketeer, the Dirty Digger is actually seeking to remove the last element of competition to him in European television.

The section of the speech about Hollywood's European roots managed to be both historically insensitive and intellectually crass. The Europeans who settled in Los Angeles were Jews fleeing persecution or death. They are now almost all dead from natural causes and the European influence has long been diluted to the point almost of invisibility. It would be as logical for Murdoch to argue that — because Australia was settled by criminals — anyone born in Australia is a criminal.



"Daytime TV helps her work through the problems thrown up by night time TV"

Murdoch's denial of Coca Cola-nisation seemed to be given support by another industry development last week. William Phillips, the television analyst, published his annual list of the most-watched television programmes of last year. To general surprise — and even allowing for Diana-week distortion at the top end of the list — only three of the shows were American and two of those were movies.

This appears to support Murdoch's argument that there is no Coca Cola-nisation of the airwaves and that home-grown culture is surviving despite the increased competition. But, in fact, the survey undermines the Digger.

The reason so few American shows were included in the list is that the greatest single importer of US material is his Sky satellite system, which is Coca Cola-nised to the extent that many evenings on Sky One offer English accents only in the occasional advert. Sky shows can never make the annual Top 100 because, thank God, they are not yet available in enough homes.

However, the reason terrestrial channels still produce so much home-grown material is precisely that they are protected by the licence fee and other regulation against direct competition with Rupert Murdoch. If what he calls "the culture of croneyism and protectionism" were ever removed, then all channels would become as dependent as his on cheap American pap.

Still, the good news about the Birmingham speech was that it demonstrated how uncharacteristically rattled Murdoch has become. His tone at the Edinburgh Television Festival a few years ago in a similar speech was triumphalist, a prediction of the death of the British television system. In Birmingham, he was irritable, bitter, raging against the unfairness of it all. He's still a multi-billionaire media megalomaniac. But with his television reverses, the Patten business at HarperCollins and the Italian Phone Call affair, he has suffered for the first time in years something near to a series of defeats.

'Square Eyes'

MEDIA NEWS

AFTER months of meetings, briefings, memos and familiarisation seminars, news and current affairs production staff are finally moving out of Broadcasting House for new offices at White City.

Their place will be taken by corporate suits from BBC Broadcast, the only directorate left at the Beeb that can afford the fantastic "rent" demanded by BBC Resources Ltd, the new "owner" of a building that once belonged to licence-payers.

With the hacks gone carpets will become plusher, noticeboards — the infamous "family of information framing systems" — will be standardised and food from the canteen will be made fit for human consumption. Wooden lavatory seats, presently confined to those sites most likely to be graced by John Birt and his bottom and those of his senior staff, will be fitted through the building.

There will be other changes, too. The news information library has all but gone already, and depressed researchers are dumping cuttings files for which no space has been allocated in a skip — starting with "Countries" files from obscure places like, er, Africa and the Middle East. Now producers face a half-hour wait just to get through to the library at Television Centre, not to mention a deadlines-busting extra hour of delay while cuttings are laboriously faxed back to them.

Some at BH can't wait for production staff to leave. Chief among these is one Mark Smith, who writes in *Ariel*: "Production staff generally complain instantaneously and are quick to point out how any money they feel we are 'wasting' could be redirected towards their programmes. Corporate people, on the other hand, tend to be more constructive in their complaints, but demand very high standards from our services."

7 30 Tomorrow's World. A new treatment for insomnia (T). [907]
Daily Telegraph

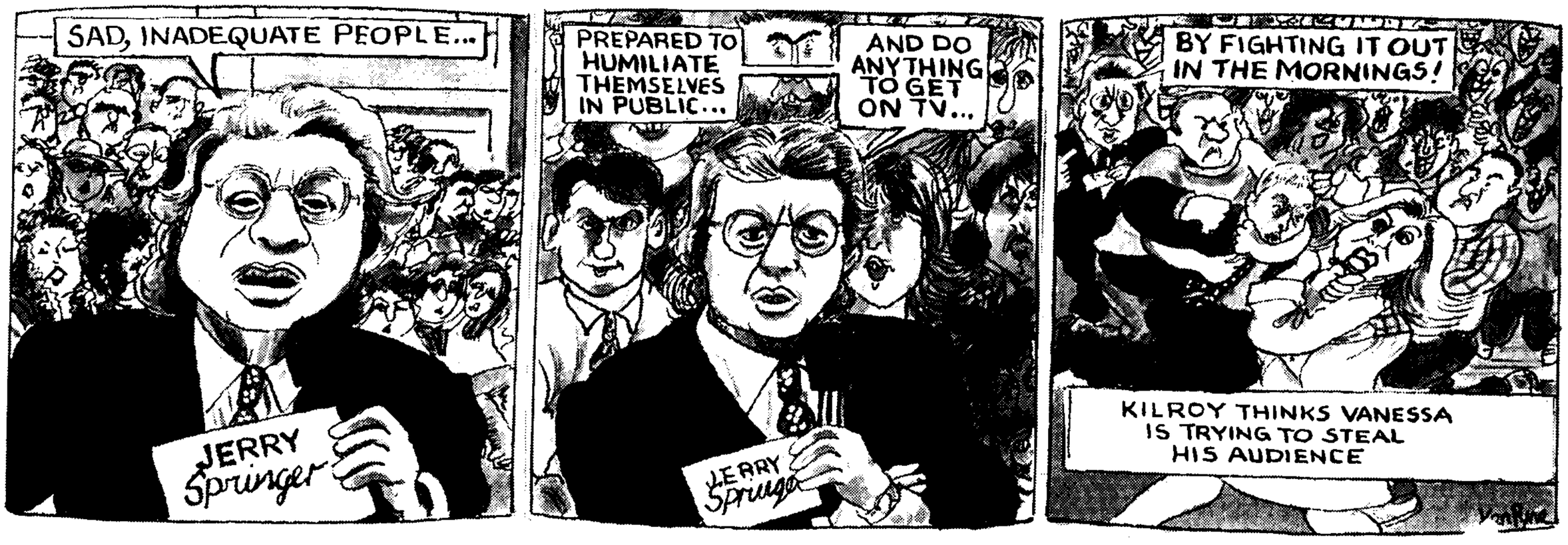
RADIO 3 may be dumbing down but it still knows how to sack people in a civilised manner.

When controller Nicholas Kenyon decided to replace the presenters of the popular *Record Review*, Tony Burton, Jonathan Swain and Richard Osborne, he told programme editor Andrew Lyle and head of the music department John Evans to break the news to the victims personally.

Lylé phoned Osborne at home in Berkshire and said he had something important he wanted to discuss. Could he and Evans come down and visit that afternoon? Osborne, having heard on the grapevine that he was for the chop, told them not to bother. Lyle said he couldn't say anything on the phone and insisted on coming in person. Osborne reluctantly agreed.

Lyle then ordered a car to take him and Evans to Berkshire. To his enormous embarrassment the hire firm provided a chauffeur-driven, Chicago gangster-style black stretch limo which sped them along the M4 and down the narrow lanes to Osborne's house.

The richly-entertained critic rewarded his red-faced guests with large G&Ts before their transport reappeared to return them, *French Connection*-style, to BH.


SAD, INADEQUATE PEOPLE...
JERRY Springer
PREPARED TO HUMILIATE THEMSELVES IN PUBLIC...
AND DO ANYTHING TO GET ON TV...
JERRY Springer
BY FIGHTING IT OUT IN THE MORNINGS!
KILROY THINKS VANESSA IS TRYING TO STEAL HIS AUDIENCE

Diana balls

"Reading University says that the decision to offer a masters in 'Death and Society' came after the death of Diana, Princes of Wales... The one-year full-time degree, which can be taken over two years part-time, includes modules on 'the modern way of death', 'disposal of the dead in the modern West', 'the sociology of the afterlife' and 'viewing the body in 17th-century England'."

— The *Times* (submitted by Philip Conford)

"In her treatise 'That's the Way the Mercedes Benz: Di, Wound Culture and Fatal Fetishism', Diane Rubinstein describes how Diana 'functions as a radical fetish of virtual reality, a move beyond alienation to a principle of otherness raised to technical perfection'. She sees the Mercedes car in which Diana was fatally injured in Paris as a 'psychotopography of interior spaces' and her wounds as 'so many new sexual organs opened on the body'. The princess's fatality 'erupts in the *mise en scene* of her body and its erotogeneity', she concludes."

— *Sunday Times* (submitted by Janice James)

THE *Eye*'s list of "dumbed-down" items in recent editions of *Today* elicited a quick response from programme editor Rod Liddle.

Not only did he write to the *Eye* pointing out that these "light" items appeared only once per programme, but noticeboards appeared overnight outside *Today*'s offices packed, Soviet newspaper-style, with cuttings showing how many *Today* stories had been followed up by the prints.

But will the prints notice that the one-per-day limit has already been broken — not least on 8 April when *Today* ran an in-depth investigation of garlic-presses by Sir John Harvey Jones, and a hard-hitting exposé on the start of the social season at the Berkeley Dress Show?

YET again rumours circulate that Rupert Murdoch has entered into a business partnership with China's much-travelled People's Liberation Army (PLA).

Two years ago such suggestions were angrily denied. But it is easy to understand how such falsehoods can gain ground. The PLA owns and operates businesses worldwide, especially in Hong Kong where News Corp's Star TV channel is based. And the fresh speculation has perhaps been prompted by the Digger's decision to chair a Star seminar on why American businessmen should give lots of money to Chinese officials (*er, "invest in one of the world's fastest growth areas", shurely?*)

Certainly Murdoch is heavily committed to the entire region. Effectively he's mortgaged News Corp's sterling and dollar assets, like its stake BSkyB, to buy Asian assets, most of which have now collapsed in value.

Star faces a similar fate if Asia's currency crisis isn't soon resolved. Yet one way to cut costs for the entire Murdoch empire would be for the Digger to own his own satellites rather than having to lease transponders from grasping businessmen like Luxembourg's Astra consortium. Launching satellites is an expensive business and governments tend to guard the technology jealously. Suggestions that Murdoch is sucking up to the Chinese in the hope that the new millennium will see them launch a couple of cut-price big birds (an even bigger bargain if paid for in local currencies) would certainly be plausible if Murdoch were prepared to deal with the hated PLA.

STAND by for some interesting appointments to the BBC board of governors.

One potential applicant who sent off to headhunters Capita RAS Ltd for further details and an application form was sent the forms to apply for "Administrative Support (Ranges 1-2) (Ranges 3-4)" at the department of trade and industry.

The applicant wonders: "If they can't send people the right paperwork, what guarantee is there that they can choose the right people as BBC governors?" Good point. One disturbing thought, however — maybe it *was* the right paperwork!

HERE's a good idea for a question to liven up BBC's increasingly dreary and predictable *Question Time*. Should women be sacked for having a baby?

The questioner might raise the recent tribunal case brought by Sarah Griffin, 33, against the *Richmond & Twickenham Times*. She was due to return to her job on the paper after the birth of her son. When the little boy developed eczema, the paper offered her a five-month extension of leave. When she accepted, she was sacked. The remedy is still being negotiated, but she is unlikely to get her job back.

FACT TO REMEMBER: The *Richmond & Twickenham Times* is owned by the Dimbleby dynasty, prop: David Dimbleby, genial host of *Question Time*.

GREG DYKE is a busy man — chairman of Channel 5, director of Man Utd and chairman of the government review committee of the NHS. But he has found time in his hectic schedule to be guest speaker at the agm of the Institute of Directors' Devon and Cornwall branch on 17 April.

After the important agm business and elections for the branch committee, members will enjoy a £20-a-head lunch at the Dartmouth Golf and Country Club, near Totnes, followed by an agreeable afternoon of golf.

It is very generous of Mr Dyke to give his time to such a worthy event. The fact that he is the major shareholder of The Dartmouth Golf and Country Club, which he purchased from receivers in February 1996, has no bearing on his availability.

HOW THEY ARE RELATED

LABOUR MP Austin Mitchell leaped to the defence of Tony Blair and Rupert Murdoch following accusations that the PM and the Dirty Digger were getting a little too close for comfort.

Mitchell has, of course, earned a handsome sum over the years for his double-act with Norman Tebbit on Sky News. And his daughter, Kiri Mitchell, pulls in an equally impressive salary as an advertising executive in London, working for... Sky Television.

NEW OLD SAYINGS

Rolling news gathers no audience

IMMIGRATION SPECIAL

FEW have opposed the sale of Rolls-Royce motors to BMW with such patriotic zeal as Michael Shrimpton, high-profile barrister, hardline Eurosceptic and leader of the maverick Rolls-Royce Action Committee.

So keen is Shrimpo to keep the Silver Lady out of the greasy mitts of "brother Hun" — as he playfully refers to Germany's BMW — he has spent the past four months winging around the world in a Lear Jet, raising £1bn in a desperate bid to keep the Roller British. He admits that his other duties have "fallen by the wayside" during his frantic globe-trotting.

This may raise a few eyebrows at the lord chancellor's department, which employs Shrimpton as a "full-time special immigration adjudicator" (hearing both asylum and non-asylum cases) and as a "part-time chairman of the immigration appeals tribunal".

While Shrimpo has been chatting up potential investors in Zurich, Vancouver, Paris and New York, thousands of asylum-seekers from Kosovo and Algeria have been arriving in Britain. One might expect that at times like this the full-time special adjudicator would be working, er, full-time to fulfil the United Nations directive on political asylum. But apparently not.

The lord chancellor's department might also be interested to learn that, despite his pivotal position in deciding the fate of helpless refugees, Shrimpton makes no attempt to disguise his rampant xenophobia. He laments the passing of Sir James Goldsmith, whom he represented at the Bar on more than one occasion. He also regrets that Bryan Gould never became Labour party leader. "He really knew what the Euros were up to," he says. "Not like the present government. I have absolutely no time for them whatsoever." He belongs to a mysterious outfit called the European Atlantic Group, which he describes as "an ideal opportunity for the Eurosceptic voice to be heard".

● THE judge who sat on the appointments panel which recommended Judge Dunn as chief immigration adjudicator was Mr Justice Kay, not, as reported in *Eye* 945, Mr Justice Keene.

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

MANCHESTER's Hallé orchestra is suffering from a deficit that Musicians' Union officials put at £1.8m. But the financial burden cannot only be blamed on the stinginess of Manchester city council (see last *Eye*). Another culprit is ego-crazed chief conductor Kent Nagano.

Nagano was hailed as the star who would change the orchestra's fortunes. In fact, he has cost them a fortune. He earns about £2,000 more in one three-concert week (£6,000 for shows in Manchester; £5,000 when conducting elsewhere) than rank and file string players get in a whole year.

While the band slogs out the miles on the road in coaches, Nagano swans around in chauffeur-driven cars and has made outrageous demands for such essentials as a grand piano in his private room at Bridgewater Hall. During rehearsals for the cripplingly expensive (and panned) presentation of *Das klagende Lied* there last September, at least one London wind player was paid to hang around for two days before the call to perform came from on high.

Worst of all, Nagano's behaviour has demoralised many members of the band. Contract principal players whose faces don't fit the Nagano image have even been made to stay at home on full pay while players from London — and in one case a flautist from Toulouse — have been drafted in.

At the time of going to press the biggest irony is the continued suspension of deputy chief executive John Whibley, the one person who has some clue how to run an orchestra. When he was suspended the chief executive Leslie Robinson promised to announce the charges against Whibley within three weeks. Seven weeks on, no charge has been announced — and Whibley has been paid to sit at home.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

DOING THE ROUNDS

AS THE millstone of Labour's pre-election pledge to reduce waiting lists grows ever heavier, health secretary Frank Dobson should be very wary: previous attempts at queue shortening by the Conservatives only worked in the short term and had disastrous deprivatory effects on non-sexy areas such as mental health.

Psychiatric services in London especially cannot afford to get any worse. As the *Eye*'s mole at Guy's esteemed York clinic puts it: "The bed policy here is totally unworkable. Mentally ill patients are admitted to wards that are already full, and then the least ill patients are selected to sleep out on other wards or in other hospitals. Last December, the acute clinic was running at 250 percent bed occupancy — ie a 24-bed unit with 58 patients. I don't need to tell you how dangerous and untherapeutic this is." Quite.

"If a ceiling was placed on [the] number of patients that could safely be admitted, the trust would have to pay for the patients to be accommodated elsewhere, often in private hospitals. As things stand, the trust is £1m under and bed occupancy never falls below 150 percent."

The unit is housed in the new "high tech" Thomas Guy House, where "nothing works, everything is botched and the waiting list for 'non urgent' technical problems is two months. Seven months after moving, we had no wall socket TV aerial. The acute unit has the worst picture I've ever seen, and while the patients may be mad, they aren't blind or stupid. Their only occupation is to watch the TV because the rehabilitation they used to be offered (occupational therapy, art therapy, etc) is now virtually non-existent. Their treatment now consists of being locked into a relatively confined space with lots of other extremely unstable people and given large amounts of medication. This is not the fault of the nursing and medical staff, who are high calibre — they are just swamped by lack of resources and mountains of ridiculous paperwork."

Superficial improvements have arrived, however, courtesy of the queen's visit on 18 March. "As the big day came closer, managers never before sighted arrived in their droves, falling over themselves to do things for us that we'd been demanding for seven months." Pictures appeared on the walls, telephones were put in — and all for the benefit of a 90-minute visit from Brenda (and for the patients, of course).

Our mole concludes: "Please don't reveal my name. Lewisham and Guy's Mental Health Trust sack their staff for talking to the press."

● THIS issue's prize for managementspeak goes to J. Watkinson, chief executive of the Kings Mill Centre for Health Care Services NHS Trust (ie a hospital), for an information pack to those applying for the post of director of human resources.

"The focus of our Organisation Development Approach in the early stages was on restructuring the organisation and developing our capability to work together across functional areas. This is known as the Structuralist phase and the Dialectic phase."

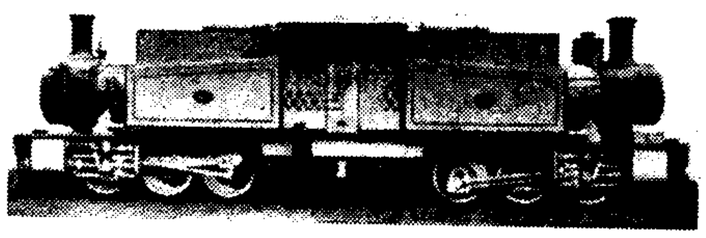
"Take all your clothes off"

The structuralist phase includes as a "key value" a commitment to "minimal hierarchy". So Mr Watkinson has developed just five "Levels of Work" as part of the "Levels of Work concept... Level 5, Field Coverage; Level 4, Comprehensive Provision; Level 3, Systematic Provision; Level 2, Situational Response; and Level 1, Prescribed Outfit."

Levels 1 and 2 restructuring "took over 18 months to complete" before the dialectical phase "reconciled differing perceptions that can develop in a restructured organisation". Sounds just the sort of approach they could do with at Guy's.

King's Mill hospital is currently £1.7m in the red.

M.D.



SIGNAL FAILURES
Focus on London Underground

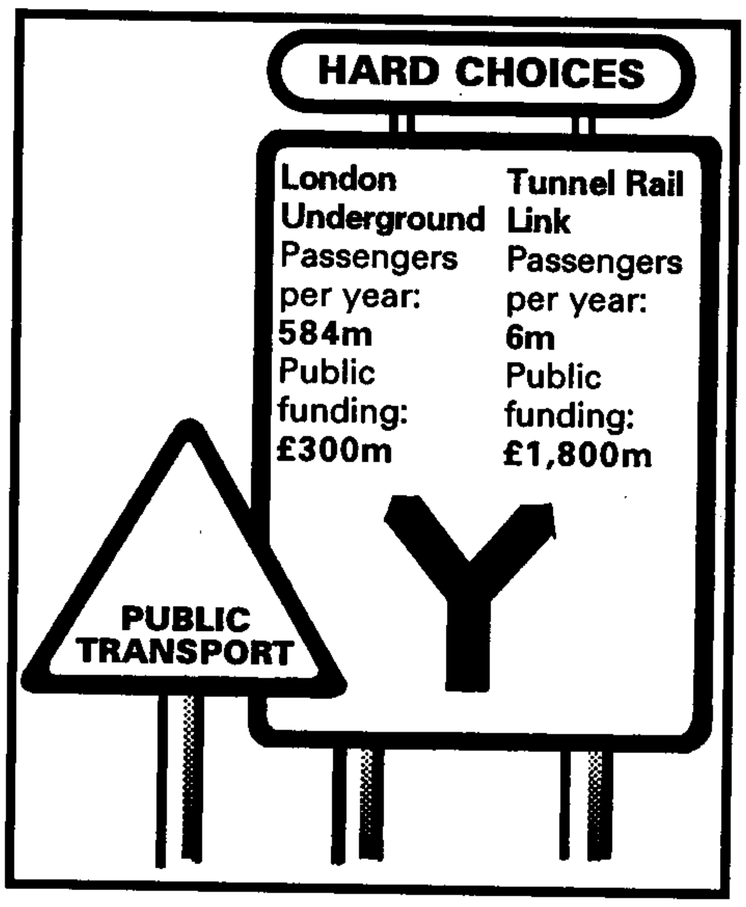
MEMBERS of the Commons transport sub-committee, which begins an inquiry into the government's plans for London Underground on 29 April, might like to ask why the treasury — having already burnt its fingers trying to get the private sector to carry the burden of rail services — is going back for more.

For decades London Underground has been seen by the rest of the world as a model urban transit system. Its structure is still fundamentally strong, but the system suffers now because the Tories withdrew the means to keep it on an even keel and switched development funding from projects badly needed by London and its hinterland to the marginal docklands Jubilee line.

Now, thanks to the treasury, the system could be turned into another private/public partnership mess containing the same flaws that bedevil the former BR system. Theoretically, privatisation saw the private sector using its own cash and taking all the risk on investing in new trains and other equipment. In practice private firms would take on the job only after subsidy for passenger services had doubled — and many are still reluctant to take financial risks.

The story of the Channel tunnel rail link, which the Tories vowed to procure with private cash, was the same. A private consortium was given £5.7bn in assets, subsidy and cancelled debt to build a £3bn rail link — but still wanted £1.2bn more. The moral of both tales is that investment in railways by the private sector costs the taxpayer far more than investment by the state.

John Prescott, forced into a corner by an obstinate right-wing treasury, has come up with a plan to involve the private sector in a £7bn investment programme for LU. He omitted to say how much of that would come from public funds; private companies are unlikely to get stuck in unless there is a big increase in cash-flow, probably through a combination of higher fares and higher subsidies. Prescott promised safeguards, like stiff penalties against contractors for bad performance; but experience shows such elements must be diluted before private firms get involved.



Prescott is embarking on a fundamental change to LU shortly before the Greater London Authority is established and a London mayor elected. Logically, funding of the Tube is an issue they would consider, but Prescott, at the behest of the treasury, is locking most of the doors before they have their say. The mayor and GLA might otherwise see two obvious ways to restore LU to a proper state: grant it freedom to borrow investment capital and plan expenditure over a relatively long timescale; or copy various overseas cities and levy a charge on local businesses specifically for improving public transport. Neither option is now open to Prescott because the treasury prefers to dream of LU being carried away by a knight in shining armour bearing a PLC logo on his shield.

PS: The Tories' plan to privatise LU, announced in January last year, was dismissed by Glenda Jackson MP as an attempt "to drive the final nail into the coffin of public transport in this country". Prescott says his new plan for the tube does *not* mean privatisation.

'Dr B. Ching'

Down on the Fish Farm

WHILE the Countryside Alliance protesters marched on London with the aid of £1m from the Duke of Westminster, around 15,000 fish were escaping from their freshwater farm cages at Loch na Thull in Scotland — close by the Duke's fishing preserve, the Laxford River.

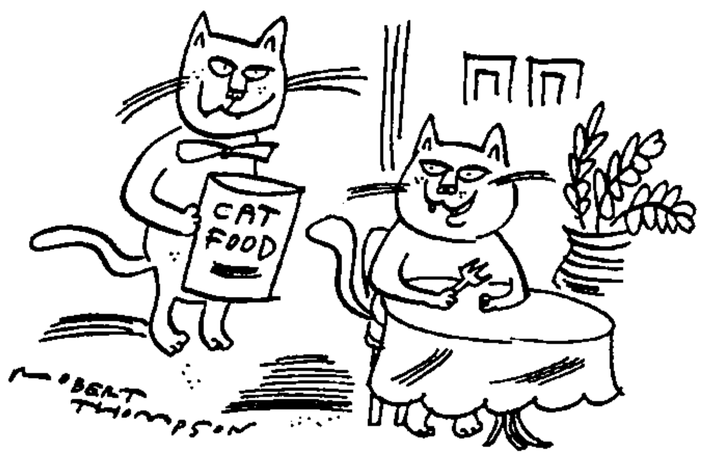
The escapees from the north west Sutherland loch will migrate out to sea and eventually return as adults to the most accessible river — the Laxford. There they will compete with wild fish for a finite spawning and food habitat. They will also interbreed with wild fish which are already adversely affected by local fish farms and the millions of sea lice they bring with them.

The farm cages in Loch na Thull are operated by Joseph Johnston & Sons. When the company applied for permission to put cages in the loch it gave assurances there would be no pollution and no escapes.

As a prime mover in the Countryside Alliance, one might have expected the Duke of Westminster to be outraged by the escapes and the damage they will do to his wild stocks. But such outrage would be hard to sustain: Loch na Thull is jointly owned by Westminster Estates and the trustees of another estate. Both gave permission to Joseph Johnston & Sons to put salmon rearing cages in the loch.

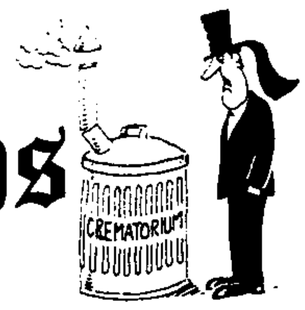
And what of the West Sutherland Fisheries Trust, set up to research the decline in wild salmon? The trust is dominated by, er, Joseph Johnston & Sons, which provides most of the cash to keep it going. Never mind: at least the Scottish Environment Protection Agency or Scottish Natural Heritage will act decisively. Considering they have never brought a single prosecution against any fish farmer in connection with anything that too seems unlikely.

'Old Trout'



"Ah the Aintree'98 – a very good year"

Rotten Boroughs



Westminster

DISGRACED Westminster council has been running a secret department to do favours for the borough's dignitaries, the *Eye* has learnt.

The VIP department, which costs several hundred thousand pounds a year, has been run by senior officers from the environment and planning department without the knowledge of most Tory councillors. Until now.

A confidential report leaked to the *Eye* says: "All VIP complaints associated with this department (ie, just about everything) are kept in a paper file within the office and dealt with as a matter of priority." If Lord and Lady Muck of Belgrave Square phone the town hall to complain about litter on their steps, they will be transferred to a special line where their problem is dealt with pronto. If "ordinary" taxpayers complain they must queue.

A very long time ago the council's Tory leaders realised that many of the country's most powerful figures — tycoons, Tory MPs, judges, peers of the realm, press barons, etc — live in Westminster. If they receive excellent service when they need it (without realising it is preferential treatment) they may look more favourably on the council when it gets into trouble. That was the theory. In reality even the council's VIP chums couldn't save it from the gerrymandering scandal.

The district auditor is now investigating.

Number crunchings

9% of total annual claims for housing benefit are estimated to be fraudulent

99% of those discovered to be engaged in housing benefit fraud escape prosecution by the relevant local authority

£900 million is what this level of fraud currently costs the taxpayer every year

Anglesey

INVESTIGATIONS at Anglesey county council have revealed a catalogue of junketing and nepotism on the remote island.

Concern began when businessmen, councillors and officers went on a jolly to Cardiff to watch a rugby match (cost £2,500). Then, more recently, two officers and council leader Gareth Winston Roberts went to another match in Paris.

The chief executive insisted this was paid for by the participants. But a district auditor's report reveals that the trip was paid for by Ecovert, the island's main refuse collecting contractor, which has just been awarded a £10m contract.

Coun Roberts, whose daughter works in the public protection department where her main duties are overseeing the Ecovert contract, was also singled out for instructing an officer to find work experience for the son of a fellow councillor, John Owen. The work experience lasted 14 months at a cost of £17,150. The post did not previously exist.

Coun Owen is also criticised by the auditor for selling four houses and a shop to the council, then leasing back the shop at a substantially reduced rent. And one councillor benefited from a sewer connection to land he owns which was given planning permission. According to the auditor, John Lewis forgot to declare his interest in the land at committee stage. He had this unfortunate memory lapse a total of seven times.

Oldie bashing

AS councillors claw back money via cutbacks and downsizings, what better group to target than the elderly?

In **Carlisle** the council has cut £100,000 from its concessionary bus fares scheme, which means pensioners must pay 75 percent of the full fare instead of 50 percent. At the same budget meeting a move by Tory councillors to scrap first class travel for councillors on town hall business was rejected by Labour councillors who were keen to protect their perks.

Meanwhile in **Allerdale** evidence has been uncovered of a black market in used travel tokens. The Labour council has cracked down, but it is pensioners rather than the fraudsters who will be punished. The elderly must now pay a £5 "administration charge" when picking up their £22 worth of travel tokens. The new charge will bring in £100,000 (which won't go far making up for the council's failed £6m timeshare project in the Lake District, exposed by the *Eye* in 1991).

Lambeth

SERIOUS questions are being asked about TeamLambeth, the partnership set up by Lambeth council and Serviceteam, which has completed its first year of contract work in the borough.

Amid controversy Lambeth last year awarded Serviceteam contracts worth £350m over a ten-year period. The deal was good news for Serviceteam, which in 1997 posted its first set of accounts since being set up in 1995. They showed losses of £15m.

With a year of contract work under its belt, however, TeamLambeth has £35m in the bank. But the methods of payment, cost and quality of service delivery and the relationship between councillors and TeamLambeth are all now being questioned.

Lambeth auditor Coopers & Lybrand has found that the council has been paying TeamLambeth before checking if works, which the council was billed for, had actually been done. Contrary to the agreement between the two parties, Coopers & Lybrand also found that a special interim arrangement has been operating whereby the chief executive's office ensured that 80 percent of monies for the 18 separate TeamLambeth contracts were paid from the centre and not by the appropriate directorates. The process of reconciling accounts begins shortly. Other worries include:

- Lambeth Homes, which runs the council's housing estates, has had to bow to pressure to pay TeamLambeth in advance, sometimes without proper invoices.
- Meals on wheels — TeamLambeth charges 50 percent more than neighbouring boroughs to deliver a service not noted for its Michelin rating.
- The £8m refuse collection and street cleaning contracts — complaints are at an all time high as rubbish piles up across the borough and fears rise of an outbreak of, er, bubonic plague.

Labour group leader Jim Dickson is supposed to answer questions from councillors about TeamLambeth. Yet when asked recently about the dubious practice of Lambeth paying the firm up front, he claimed this was news to him. This is odd because Labour's housing spokesman Tom Franklin has expressed concern in writing on more than one occasion. So incensed was councillor Anna Tapsell about the lack of response from Dickson to her questions that she resigned from the Labour group and became an Independent councillor.

Interestingly, Eversheds, the solicitors' firm that drew up the joint venture between Lambeth and Serviceteam Holdings Ltd, warned of the potential for a conflict of interest due to the unusual nature of the massive deal.

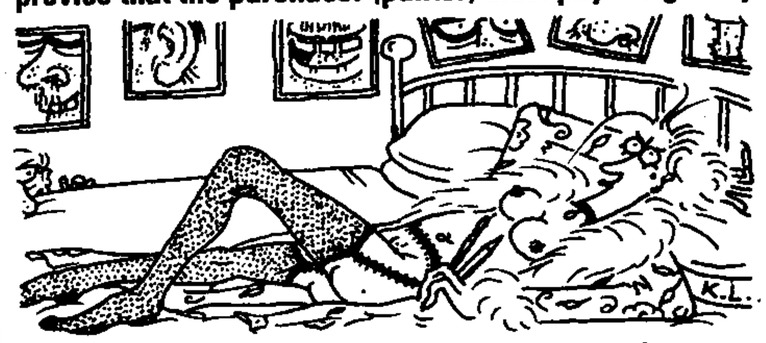
Red Face of the Week

JIM McAusland, the Yorkshire consultant hired by Rhondda Cynon Taff borough council to reorganise the housing department has recommended the sacking of 60 workers in it. McAusland was himself sacked from Boston borough council in Lincolnshire following a council investigation into alleged financial irregularities concerning a pension fund set up for him.

Pseuds Corner

Fuck Art & Pimp

Angela Marshall has an impressive record of taking art one step further into the mainstream and asking questions about her own sexuality within the context of her relationship with galleries. In this ongoing show in which the artist will literally "be fucked by both the gallery and the dealer" making this a stark comment on the world of contemporary arts, Angela will paint portraits from a previously installed King size double bed, installed by artist Matthew Calderwood. The gallery will take on the persona of the pimp. Ms Marshall will use her body and take on the persona of a prostitute. The paintings will be sold strictly with the proviso that the purchaser (punter) must pay the gallery



for Angela's portraits of the punter at a rate of between £25 and £75 per picture, and the punter must have sex with Angela in order to collect the paintings. £25 will be the price for a small head-and-shoulder 2x2 (a blow job), for £50 you can get a nice 6x7 head, shoulder and torso sketch (straight sex), or for £75 you get a nice big 6x9 full portrait (anything kinky).

Press Release from decima studios

"This Vivienne Westwood shoe sums up our ability to invest an object with cultural resonance, in this case the irony of the nurse as an image of courage, power and sex as well as compassion and service."

NIGEL COATES, Architect
Independent on Sunday

"It's particularly delicious to find Madonna with her new persona of spirituality and devoted motherhood, flummoxing the maleducated theorists of fast-track academe, who defined her as transgressive in their hamhanded careerist rummaging of popular culture."

CAMILLE PAGLIA
Wolverhampton Express & Star

Housing Maintenance Process Advisor
"...to advise on and supervise the successful quality service implementation of the upgrading of the function and practice relating to all areas of reactive, planned and cyclical maintenance in this association."

Job Description at Birmingham Jobcentre

Timeless Market Mission Statement
— To provide an outlet for the creative people in the community to share there (sic) craft and sell their work.
— To provide a pulsing, vibrant community market in the centre of Brighton.
— To create a working environment that is filled with LOVE, and to celebrate abundance on all levels.
— To design and build a purpose built indoor market as a permanent home for the market, in a central location in Brighton.
— To celebrate and acknowledge craft person-ship.

Invitation to trade at a Brighton market

Many pieces reveal his Barthesian/Jakobsonian emphasis on the mode of address, the verbal shifters of "I", "you" and "we" that speak through the human. But Penman has synthesised this formulae through drug-tech interfaces, thereby totally reconfiguring all Empires of Signs. The result is a pharmachronology which opens up a crosstownvoicetraffic of the subject.

KODWO ESHUN
i-D magazine

CONTRIBUTORS: Unknown, C. Alexander, Malcolm Millward, F. Middleton, Jeremy Dore, Unknown.

£10 paid for entries

SPOOKS

MI6 is not the only outfit haunted by its former spy Tony Holland, who has turned up in Australia and is publishing a book this summer about spying for Britain in the 1970s.

In London the *Independent* has reported Holland's claims to have hacked into the Shah of Iran's foreign bank accounts and met Moshe Dayan (disguised without his eyepatch) uranium-hunting in South West Africa under MI6 supervision, breaking UN sanctions to give Israel the atomic bomb. But in Australia, the papers are more interested in Holland's claim that his new life down under was handled by Tony Blair's drugs czar, the former chief constable of West Yorkshire, Keith Hellawell.

Hellawell's spokeswoman Charlotte Harris has denied a suggestion by the *Mail*, Melbourne, that the drugs czar "was at the centre of the cover-up which saw [Holland] jailed and sent out of the country". In a later edition she was reported as saying: "You will have to contact West Yorkshire police, but the case is basically closed."

In fact Holland's case, backed by two Yorkshire Labour politicians, is being reinvestigated by the new criminal cases review commission. His backers have a letter of support from Lord Lane, the judge who cut his sentence and noted that a police informer had "lied on his oath". Holland also received a strange letter of apology from Lord Denning.

He claims he was framed in Leeds in 1981 for receiving stolen plumbing materials, jailed for 12 months as a first offender, visited in prison by Chief Sup Hellawell and later freed at the appeal court, having promised the police that he would leave Britain with his family within three days and start a new life in Australia.

The Australians cannot understand how a convicted English thief could evade their strict immigration laws. More amazingly still, he eventually became a prison visitor at the state of Victoria's troubled Port Philip jail. Pressed in the Victoria parliament last week, minister of justice Bill McGrath said Holland must have given a false name when he became a prison visitor; otherwise his criminal record would have shown up at once.

In fact official documents show that he gave the name "John Anthony (Tony) Holland" on his consent form for Victoria police. "I did not give a false name," Holland insists. "My criminal record was wiped to allow me to migrate to Australia. I was told that if I withdrew my allegations against police my sentence would be reduced to the five months I had served."

Letters

Points West

Sir,

Re your item "A hundred grand goes West" (947), in which you ask, "What has happened to the estate of mass murderer Fred West?" Could you kindly inform us as to which date(s) and at which court(s) these convictions for murder were recorded? Perhaps you believe that no dead person, certainly not such a person as Fred West, should have **any** *redress, posthumously, against* **criminal libel**. *Or perhaps, in your legendary pursuit of journalistic excellence and accuracy, you have simply got your sexes muddled up!*

Yours faithfully,
SIMON WORMLEIGHTON,

Northampton.

Lookalike

Lego-man

Reagan

Sir,

It has come to my attention that Ronald Reagan has found himself a new job at Legoland. I think the American people should be told that he is back in a job that makes the most of his skills.

Yours,
ELAINE MATTHEWS.

Cathays, Cardiff.

Kilroy is still here

Sir,

I don't think ITV has done its viewers any favours in axing THE TIME... THE PLACE *which you consider to be pisspoor.*

It was no more pisspoor than the offerings still available from Kilroy and Vanessa, and its absence now means that ITV viewers have to endure an additional 20 minutes of the nauseous THIS MORNING. *Yuk!*

KEN CROPLEY,

Rochford, Essex.

Minimum wage content

Sir,

I am grateful for the concern expressed (947, Colour Section) that the government has not listed McDonald's as a welfare to work participant. The reason for this omission is quite simply that we are not yet participating in the scheme.

We have expressed our enthusiastic support for welfare to work and will soon confirm details of the job and training opportunities to be offered by McDonald's as part of our plans to create 5,000 new jobs this year.

You also kindly referred to comments I made in a presentation to an Industrial Relations Service conference. Unfortunately, the quotation was incomplete. My reference to "social responsibility" was one of many benefits I listed, not the only one as your comment implies. What I actually said was: "There are benefits through social responsibility, public and private partnership, and most importantly through the jobs and training opportunities created for both potential employers and employees."

McDonald's is pleased to support the principles of both the government's welfare to work and statutory minimum wage policies.

Yours,
MIKE LOVE,

Director of Communications, McDonald's UK.

Sir,

Well done for exposing the cosy relationship that is developing between the government and McDonald's over the welfare-to-work scheme (947). The company's spokesman Mike Love seems to have neglected to mention that the judge in the McLibel trial found as a fact that McDonald's pay their workers such low wages that it helps to depress the already low wages in the catering industry even further.

I'm sure your readers will be interested to know that Mike Love, McDonald's head of communications, used to be Margaret Thatcher's constituency agent. The possible opt out of the welfare-to-work scheme from the planned minimum wage therefore seems to be a "new deal" between old and new Thatcherites.

Yours faithfully,
DAN MILLS,

London N1.

Wrong signals

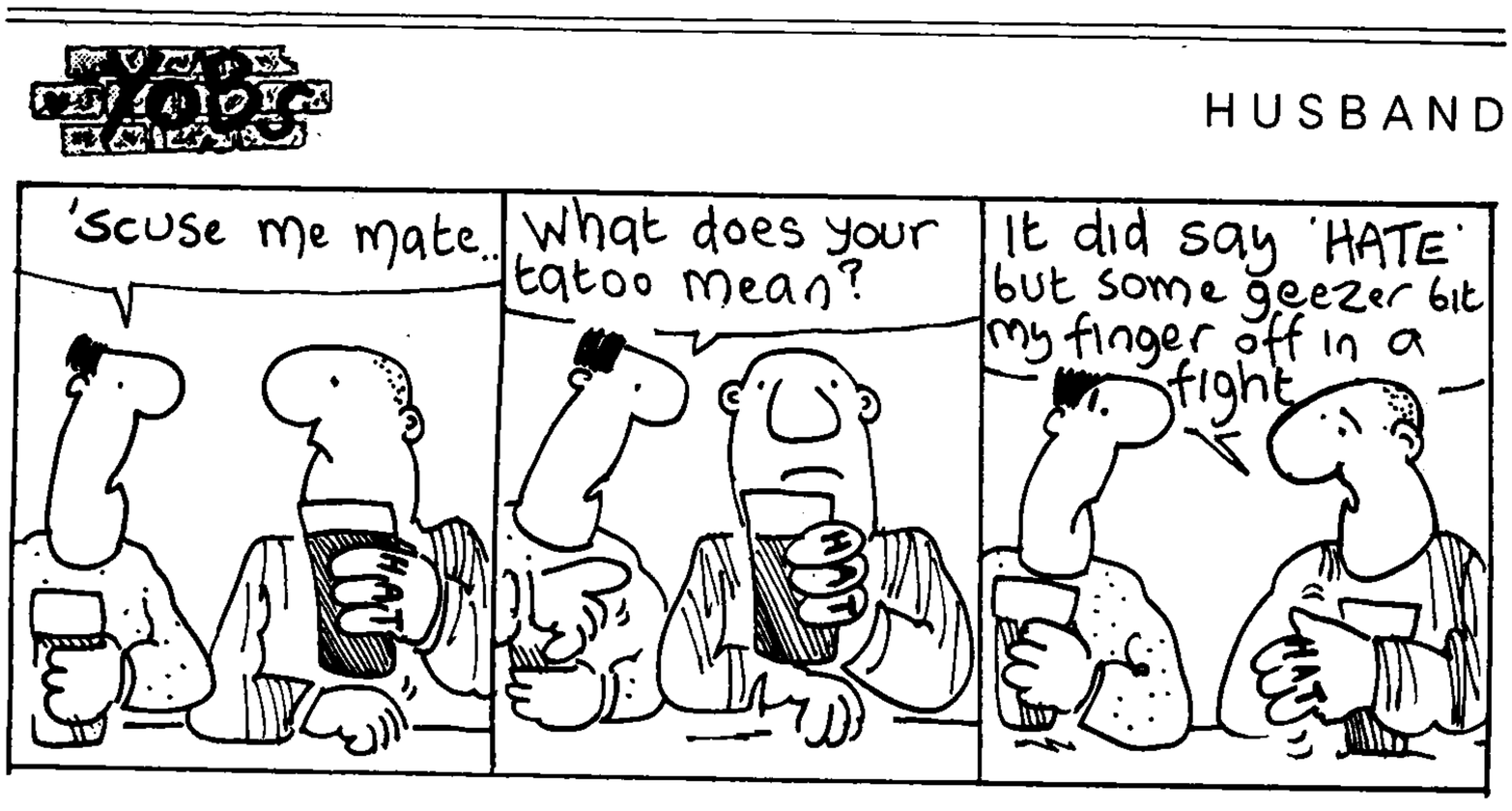
Sir,

Signal Failures (947) states that the freight train involved in the Southall crash would never have been routed in front of a passenger train in the days of British Rail. This is nonsense.

This sort of manoeuvre has been common for the 30 years I have been observing railways; the whole point of the signalling system should be to make it safe. The freight train was almost certainly not routed the way it was because of the fees paid by English, Welsh and Scottish Railways. Far more likely was the passenger train catching up with it on the same track which would have been badly delayed had the freight train not have been routed into Southall yard. Had the InterCity train slowed and stopped at the signal it would almost certainly still have reached Paddington on time.

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT MACHON,

Via e-mail.



I-SPY

Budapest

Barcelona

Submitted by Richard Blaksley and Paul Clark. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

O.B.(U).N.

Sir,

Alas, the wages of brown-nosing are not what you think. (Street of Shame, 3 April.) Dollars, not pounds. And not tax-free. UN employees pay tax to their country of origin.

You have also exaggerated my FT *salary. Even so, at present exchange rates I reckon I am taking a small pay* **cut**. *Luckily, the* FT *has promised to have me back after a year, so I look forward to sucking up to even more important people, such as your goodself.*

Meanwhile I have the honour to remain,

Your obedient servant,
(but Kofi's first),
EDWARD "MORTARBOARD"
MORTIMER,

Burford, Oxon.

Starkey naked

Sir,

I am writing in response to the "cartoon" of David Starkey (947) being represented as rude, tyrannical, etc, in the manner of Henry VIII. I attended a study weekend in October 1992, looking at Tudor buildings (some of us are really sad bastards) and David Starkey was the resident host and lecturer. He proved to be a gracious and thoughtful man who responded to many inquiries in a charming manner.

I have heard David Starkey on Radio 4's MORAL MAZE *when he has been caustic and irritable with guests, usually with good cause, but such a manner belies his true nature.*

Yours sincerely,
NORMA POSTIN,

Rugby, Warks.

Square Eyes blinkered

Sir,

Re Square Eyes, NATIONAL LOTTERY BIG TICKET. *I was angry to see in this article the phrase "as sports day at a school for the educationally sub-normal". This simile is both ignorant and offensive.*

My son attends a school for children with special needs and it is on sports day that we as parents see the genuine effort the children put in and the enjoyment they derive from such an occasion. Moreover, there is the love and dedication shown by all members of staff to the children.

To compare all this to the latest crass show from the BBC is a solecism of the very worst kind by your correspondent.

I suggest he addresses his remarks in future to the continued ruination of our national broadcaster.

Yours faithfully,
C.P. NARBROUGH,

Gravesend, Kent.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Lama came out to get the cross with his white gloves trailing in front of him."
JOHN MURRAY, Radio 5 Live
(Julian Thake)

"Italians everywhere, and here's Petrescu — a Romanian."
ALAN GREEN, Radio 5
(Nick Flindall)

"We've had drivers going off left, right and centre...."
MURRAY WALKER, ITV
(Kevan Davis)

"This is not a time for soundbites, but I feel the hand of history on my shoulders."
TONY BLAIR, Stormont Peace Talks
(Donald McDonald)

The Bridgewater Three

Sir,

While your criticism of Manchester council is, on the whole, correct (Rotten Boroughs, 947) I must disagree with your observations of the Free Trade Hall and the Bridgewater Hall. The Free Trade Hall was not "homely and welcoming" but ill-equipped, cramped and uncomfortable. The Bridgewater Hall, on the other hand, is not "wretched" but comfortable, attractive and very popular. The acoustics are admittedly not perfect but are in the process of "bedding in" which takes time and constant adjustment.

The main irony of the situation is that Bridgewater Hall has actually paid for itself already and is in profit, while its main attraction is in such financial trouble.

Please stop knocking a concert venue the whole of Manchester can be proud of, but keep up the good work on knocking the bloody council.

Yours faithfully,
EDDY RHEAD,

Old Trafford, Manchester.

Sir,

1) Bridgewater Hall/Hallé Orchestra, Manchester. I can assure you that the Bridgewater Hall is not a "wretched building". I attended concerts at the Free Trade Hall for many years and was impressed neither by its facilities nor its appearance.

The Bridgewater, on the other hand, has good accommodation, plenty of leg room, even in the cheapest seats, broad stairways and accesses and lots of space to walk around in outside the auditorium on all levels.

I don't know much about acoustics, but, from the back of the gallery where my wife and I sit with the rest of hoi polloi, we reckon we can hear the orchestra better than ever we could in the Free Trade. We are certainly much nearer to the platform than we were in the equivalent seats in the Free Trade.

2) Cartoon — "Many Behaving Badly". I don't think that Our Lord's crucifixion is a suitable subject for a comic cartoon. There might be some excuse for using the subject thus if the result were funny or made a point. The above cartoon wasn't and it didn't.

Yours respectfully,
DAVID BRINDLE,

Prestwich, Manchester.

Sir,

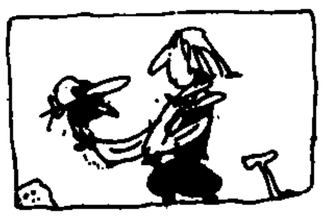
Oh, come **on**. *Manchester's Bridgewater Hall certainly isn't "a wretched building with pisspoor acoustics".*

It's just not as good as Birmingham's Symphony Hall, that's all — but nor is anywhere else.

Yours musically critically,
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY,

Halesowen.

LUVVIES



Matthew, do you have a message of hope and inspiration for people reading this interview?

"Just good luck, follow your dreams and hopefully things will get better. There are people out there who care and want to help. It's that kind of thing that makes it worthwhile to all of us. It's a really important part of what we do."

Jennifer, if you had a message, something people could hold on to, what would it be?

"I'd say nothing is impossible. I think your dreams really are something to hold on to and focus on. You can achieve whatever you want to achieve, but you really have to know who you are and love yourself. That's the hardest business in the world."

The Duchess of York talks to the cast of *Friends* in Hello!

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Cash plea to aid dyslexic cildren

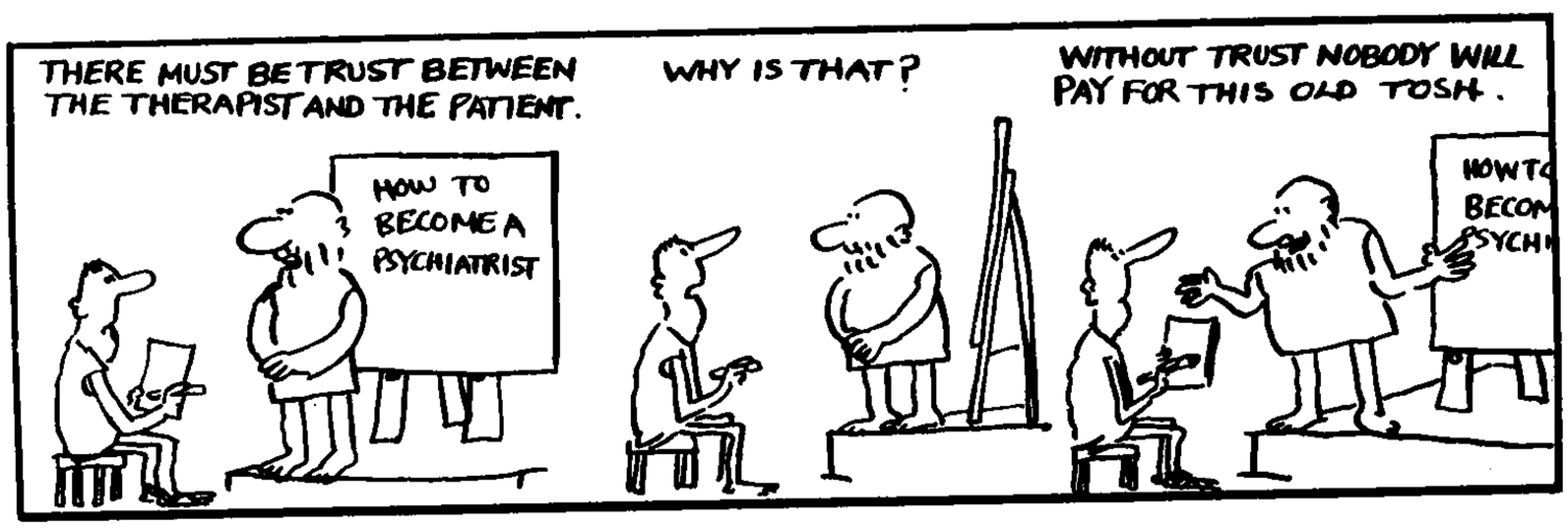
South Wales Evening Post

But the troupe are still short of a male member after one of the strip group broke his foot.

South Wales Evening Post

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN


THERE MUST BE TRUST BETWEEN THE THERAPIST AND THE PATIENT.
HOW TO BECOME A PSYCHIATRIST
WHY IS THAT?
WITHOUT TRUST NOBODY WILL PAY FOR THIS OLD TOSH.
HOW TO BECOM PSYCH

FUNNY OLD WORLD

● "For four months I've only been able to eat pot noodles and soup," Ridha Bouhlal complained to journalists outside his Stockholm restaurant. "I know that I fell behind with the payments, but I ask you, is that any reason to deprive a man of his teeth?"

Bouhlal's predicament followed dramatic cutbacks in Sweden's public dental and health insurance. "I'd worn cheap false teeth for years, but I wanted a set of proper implants, which cost 40,000 kroner. My dentist, Ola Saaw, did my upper jaw first, and I paid him 22,000 kroner. But by the time he'd done my lower jaw, my restaurant was in financial trouble and I couldn't pay the bill. I explained this to him, as I was sitting in the chair. He just smiled and said that, in that case, he had no option but to remove all my teeth. And, before I could protest, he'd whipped them all out.

"That was four months ago, and I still can't chew. And the worst thing is that I can't even use my old set of teeth to eat with, because he left the titanium screws in my jaw, and the plate won't fit in my mouth."

When questioned by reporters from the Svenska Dagbladet, Ola Saaw declared "I am not being harsh. The rule is simple. If you can't pay, you can't have teeth." *(AFP, 30/3/98. Spotter: Darren Ingram)*

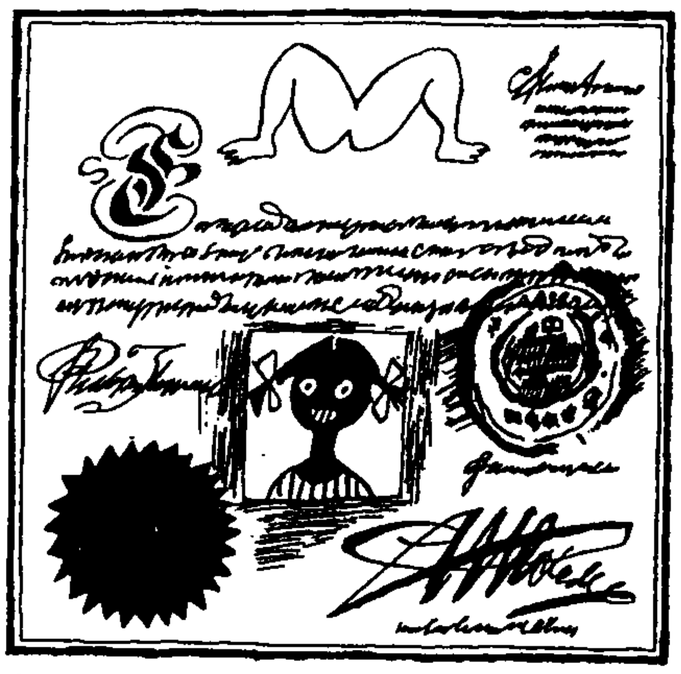
—●—

● "PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT from: Patrick Hosea, White River. Some people are spreading a rumour around town that I had an affair with one of my first cousin's sisters, and that she has been living with me. Those responsible went as far as saying that we were seen together in the nude. Most of what they say about us is very defamatory, damaging, and malicious in nature. I TOTALLY DENY THIS. The rumour is false. PLEASE DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST OTHERS. Many of you who have heard this rumour and believed it have said very bad things about me. I forgive you all and may God bless you. Many of you reading this will not believe me. With so many stories made up about me in the past, I can understand your reasoning. I have but Jesus to count on, and I pin all my hopes on him. Whatever gave you the idea to frame me up is beyond the comprehension of my little brain. You must be getting a lot of satisfaction from it. I KINDLY and FIRMLY ask you to refrain from making up stories. I may be living alone. I may not be saying much. I may even look like an idiot. However, I am not stupid to commit what you accuse me of against my close blood sisters. I ONLY EVER USE MOUTH, NO HANDS. Have a merry Christmas everyone and look forward to a happy new year without hearsay and gossiping. THANK YOU AND MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL, Patrick Hosea." *(Solomon Star [Solomon Islands], 28/11/97. Spotter: Mike Hadley)*

—●—

● *"I don't feel degraded in any way when taking the virginity test," Nombuso Duma told reporters at an Aids festival near Durban. "I am not ashamed of people knowing I'm a virgin. I am proud of still being pure as it prevents sexually-transmitted diseases and pregnancies."*

Nombuso was one of three hundred girls who turned up for the traditional KwaMashu custom of testing the virginity of young women. Andile



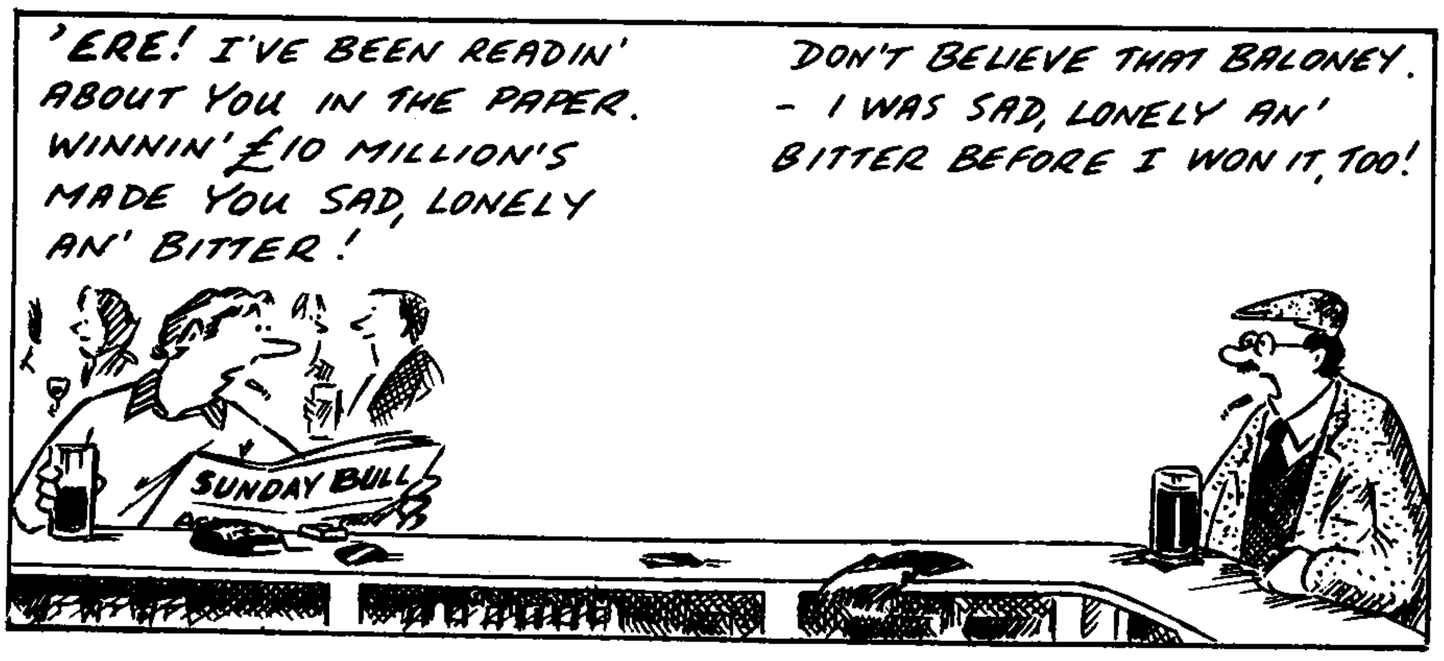
Gumede, a clerk at Ndwedwe Magistrate's Court, explained what was involved: "the girls line up wearing only a short beaded traditional mini-skirt, and then lie on the open ground with their legs apart. Then I examine each girl to make certain she is intact, while a crowd of onlookers watch the proceedings, and applaud loudly when I give the thumbs up gesture. No one ever fails the test, because non-virgins simply do not apply.

"I am told that women in many parts of the world would see the test as a humiliating and degrading invasion, but people here see it as an honour. And each girl receives a certificate of virginity, signed by me, which is invaluable when negotiating a dowry with her future in-laws." (South African Star, 18/3/98. Spotter: Colin Mendelowitz)

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

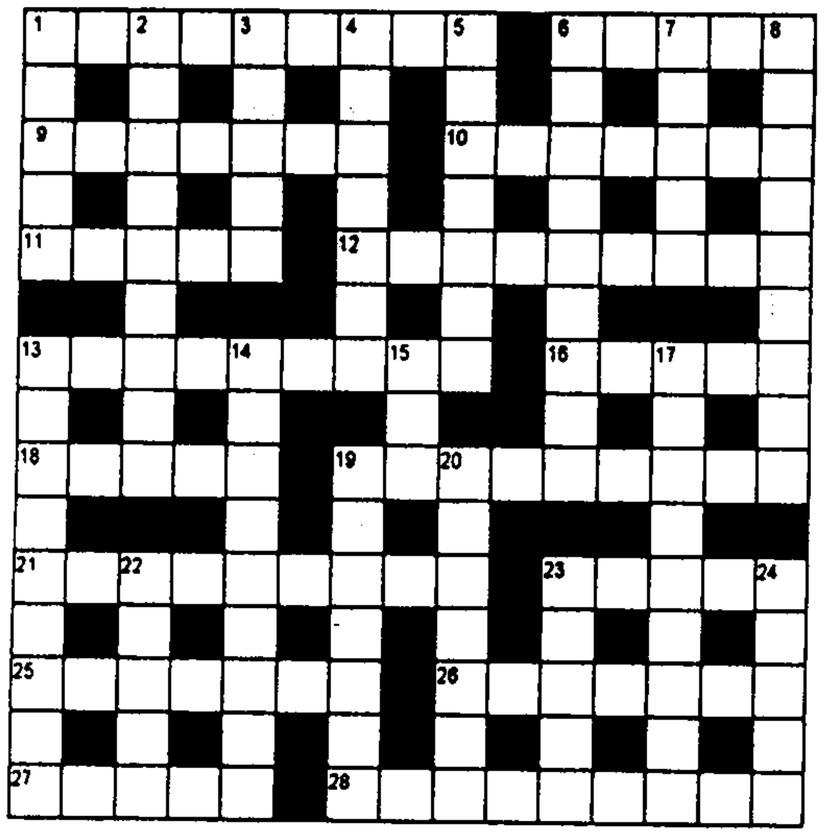
The Lottery Winners

TURNER


'ERE! I'VE BEEN READIN' ABOUT YOU IN THE PAPER. WINNIN' £10 MILLION'S MADE YOU SAD, LONELY AN' BITTER!
DON'T BELIEVE THAT BALONEY. - I WAS SAD, LONELY AN' BITTER BEFORE I WON IT, TOO!
SUNDAY BULL

EYE CROSSWORD 103

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1/15/22/8/26 Reportedly like a Picasso portrait of division among British politicians? (3,4,2,3,5,3,4,2,3,4)
6 Outburst puts one right off the PM by the way (5)
9 The piss-taker that's in all of us (7)
10 Name some leaden tit "Leonard" (7)
11 Love sex on a soft-backed terrace (5)
12 Lancashire offering key to Prescott's last love – an awkward situation (3,6)
13 Try to pray for rehabilitation of this defeated band! (4,5)
16 Supporters of Ashdown holding comfortable seats (5)
18 Liam's head afflicted by Ecstasy – gets a place on the Continent (5)
19 It could help close the big gap between paparazzi and celebs (9)
21 One gets round dilemma of Ireland: it sets the pulse racing (9)
23 They're responsible for many a prick turning sore to a point (5)
25 In US, fine material stiffened penis possibly by back yard (7)
26 (see 1ac)
27 Girl who's willing to have child by gutless Conservative (5)
28 Jim's spoon-bending — will he get away with it? (1,1,7)

DOWN

1 Donald's model parliament? (5)
2 Suffragettes eventually were on such a roll (9)
3 Yob rings Straw up (5)
4 Sky's first 'pap-producer' dish (7)
5 Publicly outs Tory lover — no alternative (7)
6 What you might have to cry to make an arse get a drink? (7,2)
7 Murdoch's satellite has a bearing on the destruction of art (5)
8 (see 1ac)
13 To discuss intercourse with sailor not fashionable? (4,5)
14 Labour and child benefit, the expected outcome of this? (9)
15 (see 1ac)
17 French supporters not going down well with the typical English consumer? (5,4)
19 Reckon on winning 40% of House, as the foxhunting fraternity says? (5-2)
20 'Clint's universal remedy' for a sore throat (7)
22 (see 1ac)
23 It makes you snotty-nosed, drink spiked with heroin and ecstasy (5)
24 A force for evil, like flipping Brown! (5)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 24.04.98. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 102

Winner: R.J. GLUCKSTEIN

ACROSS: 1 Beef on the bone 10 Hare-brain 11 Syria 12 Appease 13 Bolshie 14 Glib 15 Stagecoach 19 Lie in state 22 Shoe 24 Fish-eye 26 Etching 27 Hymen 28 Leicester 29 Party politics

DOWN: 2 Europhile 3 Fabian 4 Nearest 5 Handbag 6 Basilica 7 (see 8) 8/7 The Angel of the North 9 Page three girl 16 Aga 17 Atheistic 18 Internet 20 The clap 21 The pill 23 Accent 25 Samba.

PROTEST MARS TRADITIONAL EASTER CELEBRATION

by our Religious Affairs Staff **Sir Clifford Richard**

THERE were scenes of chaos yesterday when the Archbishop of Canterbury and a group of supporters stormed into the Cathedral during a traditional Easter Day address by Peter Tatchell.

The congregation gasped as Carey invaded the pulpit and attempted to deliver an Easter message about the love of God before being shouted down by outraged homosexuals.

Amazing Gays

Carey and his followers then began to chant christian slogans and songs including Hymn Number 94 omitting verses six and seven.

Said the Reverend Tatchell later: "It is a great shame that a vocal minority of christians should spoil it for the vast majority of ordinary gays and lesbians who want to celebrate same-sex marriage and a reduction in the age of consent."

Yesterday's protest by christian rights activists was clearly designed to draw attention to Easter, but Rev. Tatchell maintained his dignity during his ordeal keeping silent throughout except to shout occasionally "Carey! Carey! Carey! Out! Out! Out!"

ON OTHER PAGES

"I found the face of Tatchell in my Big Mac!" says Greek cabbie 7

George Michael — Behind the tortured figure of the artist is there a sad bloke tossing in a toilet? 8, 9, 10, 11, 94

(Reprinted from the Observer)

Dave Spart, Co-Chair of the Bermondsey Primary School Assistants Against Iraqi Sanctions Alliance.

Er... it is utterly sickening to see the so-called Education Secretary telling teachers that they are failing pupils when we all know that the concept of failure and success in education is totally outdated and discredited and merely encourages social divisiveness, class factionalism and er basically fascism whereas we the working members of the teaching profession currently on strike should be judged performance-wise only on a continual assessment basis by our own professional peers, i.e. other teachers, rather than inspected in an artificially constructed judgemental environment, i.e. the current quasi-examination situation blatantly designed to weed out those who cannot teach er *(Cont. page 94)*

Gnome Wedding Of The Century Souvenir

Your chance to own the coolest fashion item of all time!

The Robin Cook Sneaky Wedding Anorak

Designed exclusively for the House of Gnome by top Dublin-based waterproof leisurewear designer Anne O'Rack, this stunning garment is identical in every detail to the nuptial outfit worn by Foreign Secretary Robin Cook at his fairytale wedding at Neasden Registry Office (249 PriceRite Road, opposite Asda and next to Abbey National).

How to get there

Sightseers should take the Number 94 bus to the Spud 'u' Like roundabout, then cross the North Circular via the underpass to Neasden East Underground Station. Southbound trains stop at Neasden Park. On leaving the station *(That's enough directions. Ed.)*

Send £4.99 at once to Gnome Anorak Offer, Unit 5, The Iain MacGregor Industrial Estate, Sutton Ex-Coldfield.

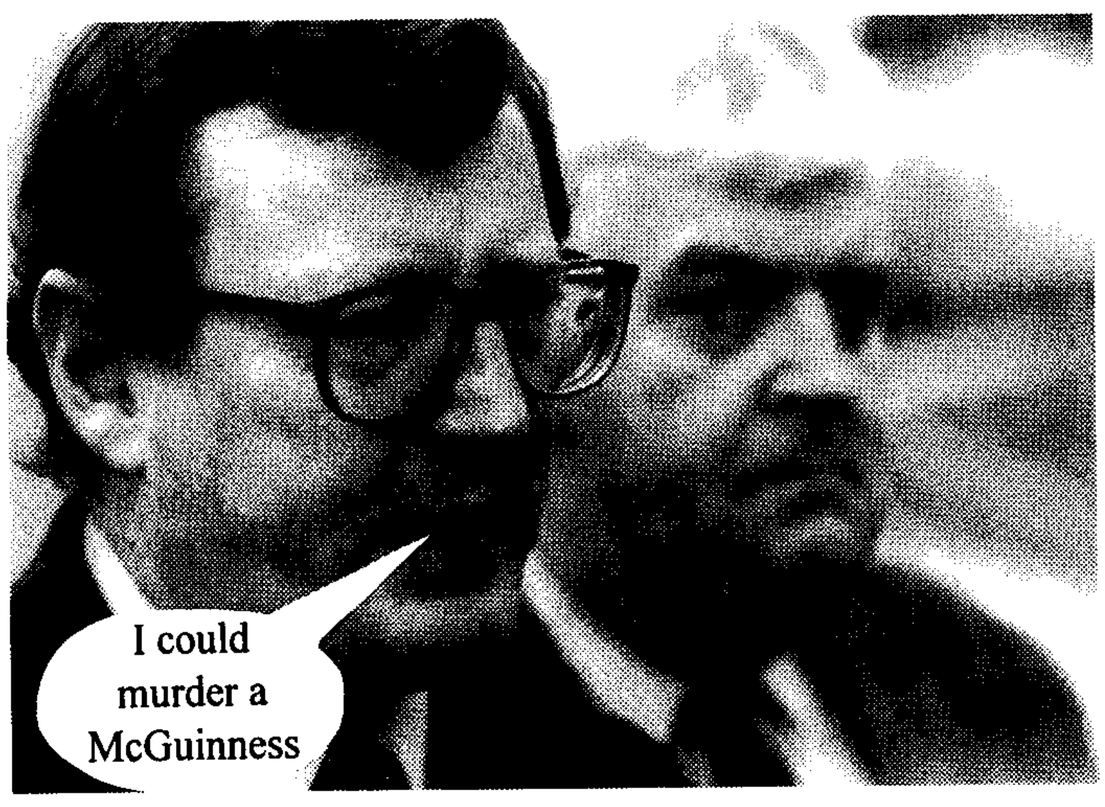
Spring Floods

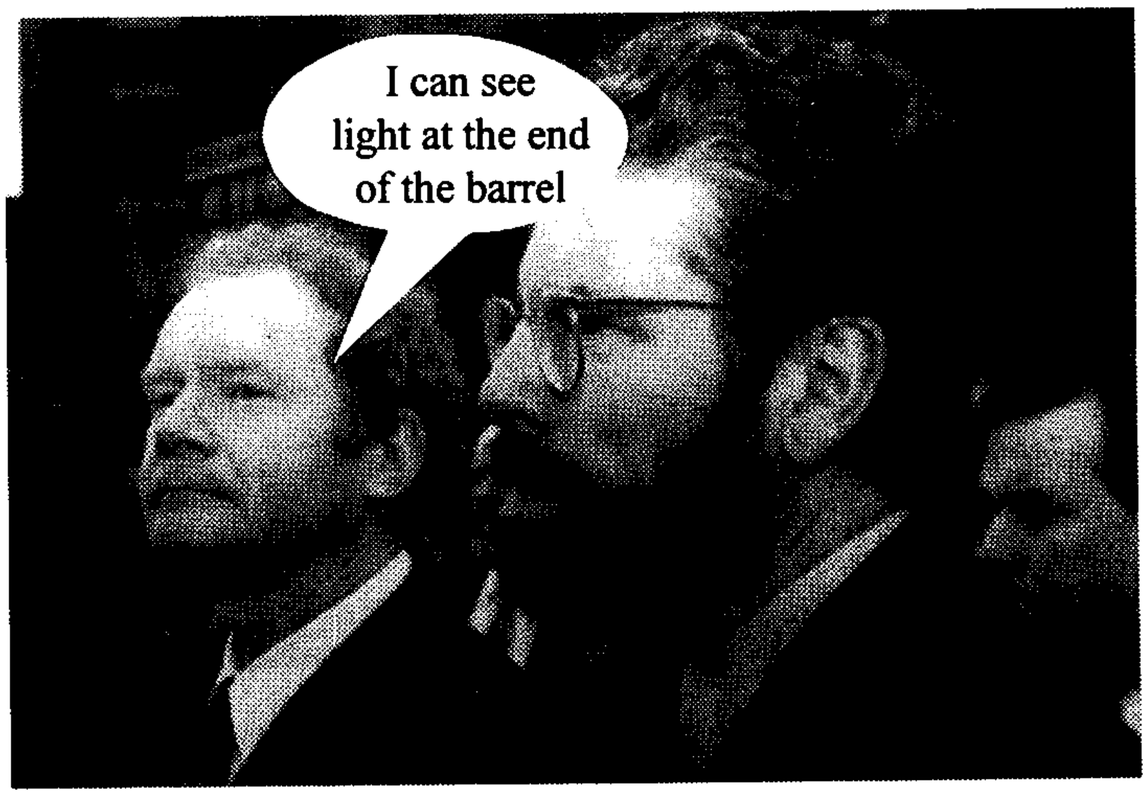
From Sir Herbert Gusset

Sir, Today I was sitting at my study window looking out at my garden when I spotted the first bream of spring. It swam past the potting shed and nested in the seaweed on top of my car.

Yours sincerely,
SIR HERBERT GUSSET
Stratford-under-Avon
Sinks

MARATHON TALKS END





ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

We are delighted to reprint here the vicar's historic address to the St. Albion's Mission in Ulster delivered on Good Friday 1998.

Look!

I am here because I feel the hand of history on my shoulder telling me to be with you at this difficult time. And talking of the hand of history makes me think of what else we do with our hands.

We put them up to be counted. Don't we? We "hand" out gifts to the needy. If they deserve them, obviously. But most important of all, we shake hands as a sign of peace. And I'd like you all now to turn to the person next to you, yes, you Mr Adams and Mr Trimble, and offer each other the hand of peace. Come on! Look. I haven't got all day. The "hands" of the clock are ticking away. I've got a plane to catch to go to Spain and you have got a date with destiny.

And what are you going to "hand" on to future generations? Destruction or dialogue? Combativeness or compassion? Conflict or consensus?

These are the "handy" ways to think about the future. And let's do that rather than dwelling on the past. And remember, tomorrow is the first day of the rest of your life, as it says in The Little Book of Cool chapter 7, verse 14.

So as a final thought, let me stress again my theme of "hands". Everyone needs to lend a helping "hand" to their neighbour. Especially at this time in this place, here and now. History is ahead of us, not behind us. I repeat, history is ahead of us, not behind us. Let us now stand and sing our final chorus adapted from a rather outdated old hymn from the past to become a pivotal new hymn for today.

"Hands up hands up for peace
Ye soldiers of the process"
(Words and music arr T Blair)

X X THANKYOU X X

● I would like to thank all those parishioners who have written to me by the sackload to express their concern for the terrible miscarriage of justice which has been inflicted on Mrs Deirdre Rachid.

Mrs Rachid has had a very sad life. I gather from your letters that, after the sad death of her late husband, who donated a kidney to her daughter Tracy, she embarked on a relationship with a professional confidence trickster, and she has now been quite wrongly imprisoned for his crimes.

As you know, I usually leave these kind of matters to the police, who know best what to do. But Mr Campbell tells me that so many of you are genuinely worried about this case that I must step in and give a lead.

Cherie has agreed to put up a "Free Deirdre" poster in the vicarage window, and I am organising a special service of intercession for this brave and wronged Asian lady next Sunday evening.

I have written a special chorus for the congregation to sing, which goes:

"O Lord who sets the captives free
Please let out our friend Deirdree."
(repeat)

Your friend
Tony

Wedding Bells...

We are all delighted at the news that Mr Cook and Gaynor have at last tied the knot! Well done both of them! What a fine testimony this is to the institution of marriage! We wish them all the luck in the world! TB

Appointments

Congratulations to Mr Mandelson, our church warden, who assumes additional new responsibilities this month as Chief Co-Ordinator of Parish Co-Ordination, Head Manager of the Management Team and Leader of the St Albion's Scout Troupe ("The Mandies" — Motto: "You will obey"). Please address any matters concerning the parish to Mr Mandelson.

Around The Parish

*Mr Cook has put on a first rate display in the **Whitehall Community Centre** to celebrate the "rebranding" of St Albion's (a great new word for a great new idea!). Inside his very eye-catching and original silver "bouncy castle" there is a wonderful array of items representing all the pivotal vibrancy of life in our parish today.*

*For instance, there is a solar-powered toaster from "Mr Toaster" in the high street; a selection of up-to-the-minute leisure wear from **Selby's the Outsize House**, and a very lifelike model of the Tower of London made out of cheese by **Patel's All-Night Dairy**. Altogether, Mr Cook and his team are to be congratulated on such a fascinating display! Thank you for all your hard work! TB*

Olé! It's a Sherry Blair!
The Vicar takes a well-earned Easter Break!

You Write...

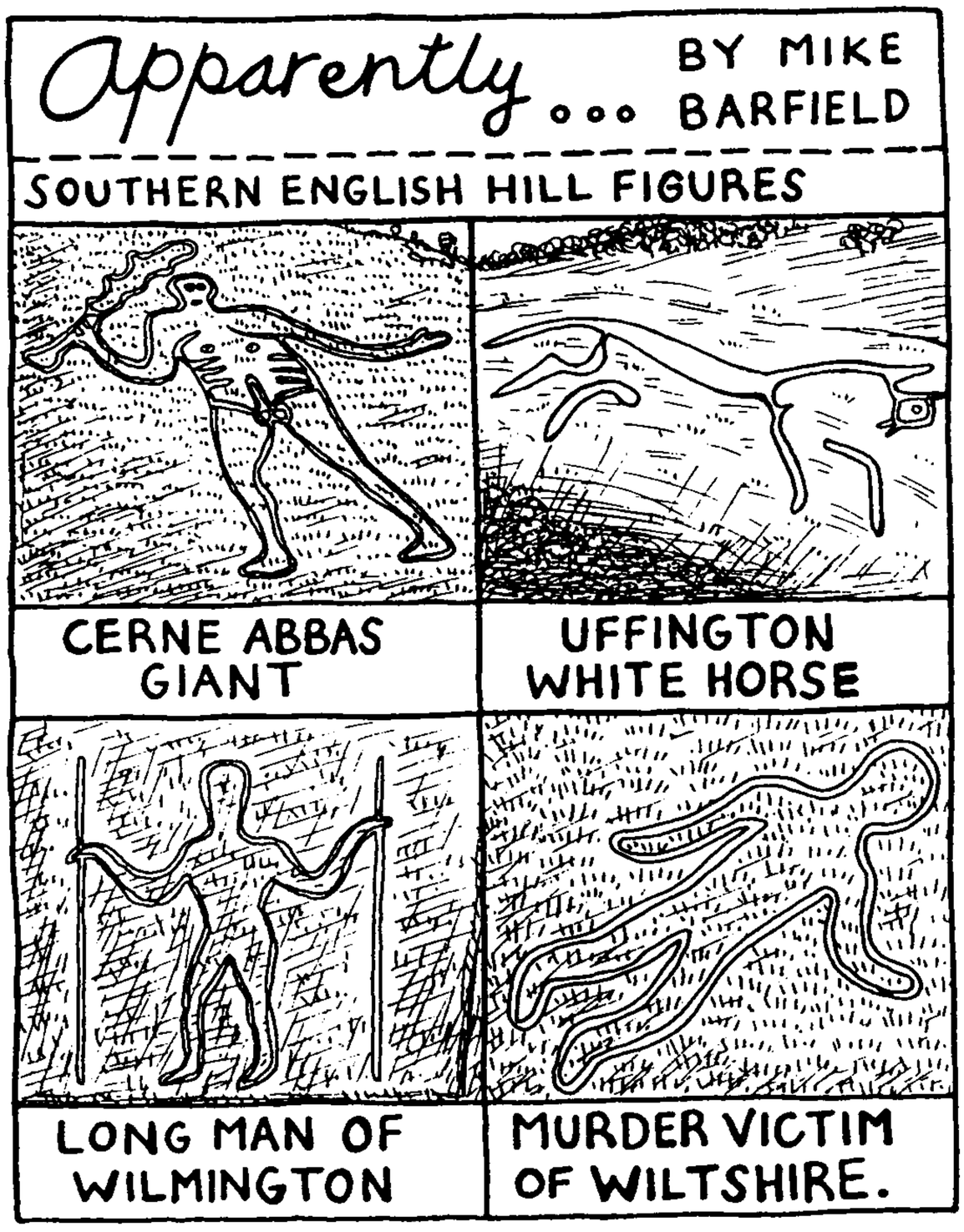
Dear Sir,

Although I am second to no one in my admiration for the Vicar, I would like to register my protest at the fact that we see so little of him after the service. He is quite happy to come to church to preach his sermons, but he never stays on for coffee and biscuits and a chat. Those of us who remember the Rev Wilson find this high-handed and arrogant approach does

Yours sincerely
Brian Sedgemore, Hackney Road.

The Editor reserves the right to shorten letters in the interests of space and also to write rude replies to anyone who writes in criticising Tony in any way. This also applies to various senior members of the PCC who are not to make any statement on parish matters except in this newsletter via me. Mr Field and Mrs Harman will know who I am talking about!

Alistair Campbell, Editor



THE TIMES FRIDAY APRIL 17 1998

Leave My Bosses Alone

writes Glibby Purves

I HOLD no brief for Mr Rupert Murdoch. As far as I am concerned, he is just the man who pays my wages.

But when I see the media all going for him, just because he doesn't want to publish Chris Patten's silly, boring memoirs, it makes me want to stand up and shout "Hang on, what has Mr Murdoch ever done to you?"

As far as I am concerned, it is entirely his own business which writers he chooses to sack, and which he chooses to allow to continue writing their column in the Times.

Similarly, I hold no brief for the BBC and Mr James Boyle, head of Radio Four. As far as I am concerned, they are just the people who sign my salary cheque for doing the brilliant Mid-Week programme (now, as part of the great Radio Four facelift, re-named "Midweek" and starting at the slightly later time of 9.07).

But when I see the media all ganging up to have a go at the new Radio Four, just because it's the same as the old one except slightly more boring, it makes me want to stand up and shout: "Hang on, what has Jimmy Boyle ever done to you? Don't you realise that the BBC is one of the greatest institutions in the entire history of civilisation? And it has a perfect right to choose which presenters should be sacked, and which should be allowed to continue presenting their superb, though slightly shorter Mid-Week programmes just after the nine o'clock news."

And now, to cap it all, Mr Rupert Murdoch has made a brilliant and courageous speech attacking the brilliant and courageous BBC. Oh dear. What on earth am I to say? I think I had better keep quiet on this one and write about my life in the Suffolk countryside.

© *Glibtrash Productions, The Times*

Phase 2 of the scheme is to install 3.5 kilometres of paperwork from Highmoor Cross to Nettlebed Reservoir *Thames Water*

Our Adolescent and Pest Control Services were awarded Charter Marks by the government for excellent public service, *Islington Council leaflet*

LOVER OF BLONDE WOMAN GOES HOME
NATION IN SHOCK

by Our Current Affairs Staff **Phil Space**

BRITAIN reeled last night after the shock announcement that the businessman who had run off with the blonde woman on television has decided to go home to his wife and children.

From Land's End to John O'Groats the nation has been discussing little else for months, and the unexpected fairytale ending to the story was last night greeted with spontaneous street parties, tears of joy and hastily organised services of thanksgiving in churches from Land's End to John O'Groats. *(You've done that bit, Ed.)*.

Said one overcome old-aged pensioner, "It's just like winning the lottery. I'm so happy for the blonde woman's lover's wife who must be over the moon after all she has been through."

Turner Prize Idiot

In a special statement issued from Number 10, Downing Street, the Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair said, "We have all been deeply moved by the plight of the blonde woman's lover's abandoned wife, particularly the episode where she wore the red dress at that party and danced around next to the blonde woman.

"She really exemplified all that is meant by Cool Britannia, and we wish her and her husband and children all the best in their new life without the blonde woman."

The Leader of Opposition Mr William Hague was quick to add his congratulations to those of Mr Blair.

"The reuniting of the blonde woman's lover with the woman in the red dress exemplifies all that is best about modern Conservatism — which believes very strongly in the institution and integrity of marriage. But since Ffion and I are also very much in favour of living in sin, we therefore have tremendous sympathy for the blonde woman in her tragic plight and we believe the hearts of the nation will go out to them all at this time."

Anthea Turner is 31.

MAN WITH FUNNY BEARD FOUND IN TOILET

by Our Showbiz Staff **Lou Dact**

Los Angeles, Wednesday

A man with a funny beard was discovered in a public toilet today. He gave his name as Stavros Tellysavalas Taramasalata. *(Reuters)*

NASA REVEAL SECRET OF MYSTERY FACE ON MARS

by Our Space Staff **Adam Marrs**

THE mysterious face visible on the surface of Mars has at last been explained by scientists working at the US space agency NASA.

Thanks to pictures taken by the space probe "Fuggin 7", the so-called face turns out to be a man-made phenomenon formed by billions of unsold copies of the humorous magazine Punch.

Waste of space

Said a NASA spokesman, "The magazine has been launched five times in the last 5 years with the inevitable result that huge quantities of magazine detritus

have been dumped on Mars — creating this vast structure that looks like a face."

The Daily Telegraph

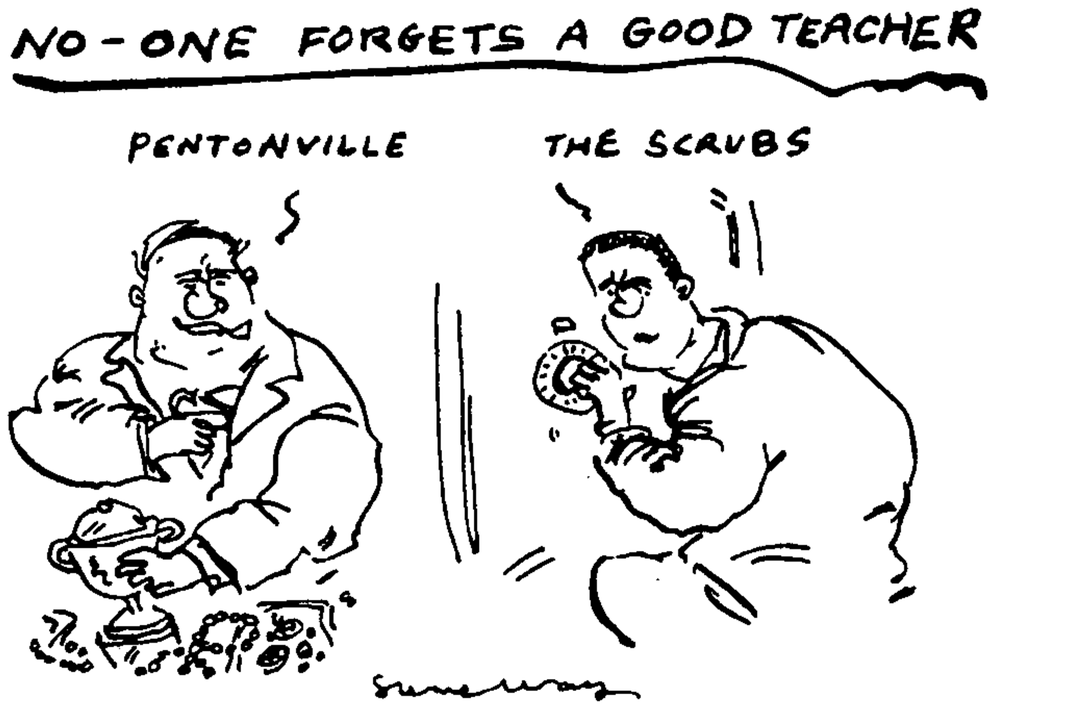
Est. 1855

Should Heterosexuals Be Allowed To Join The Armed Forces?

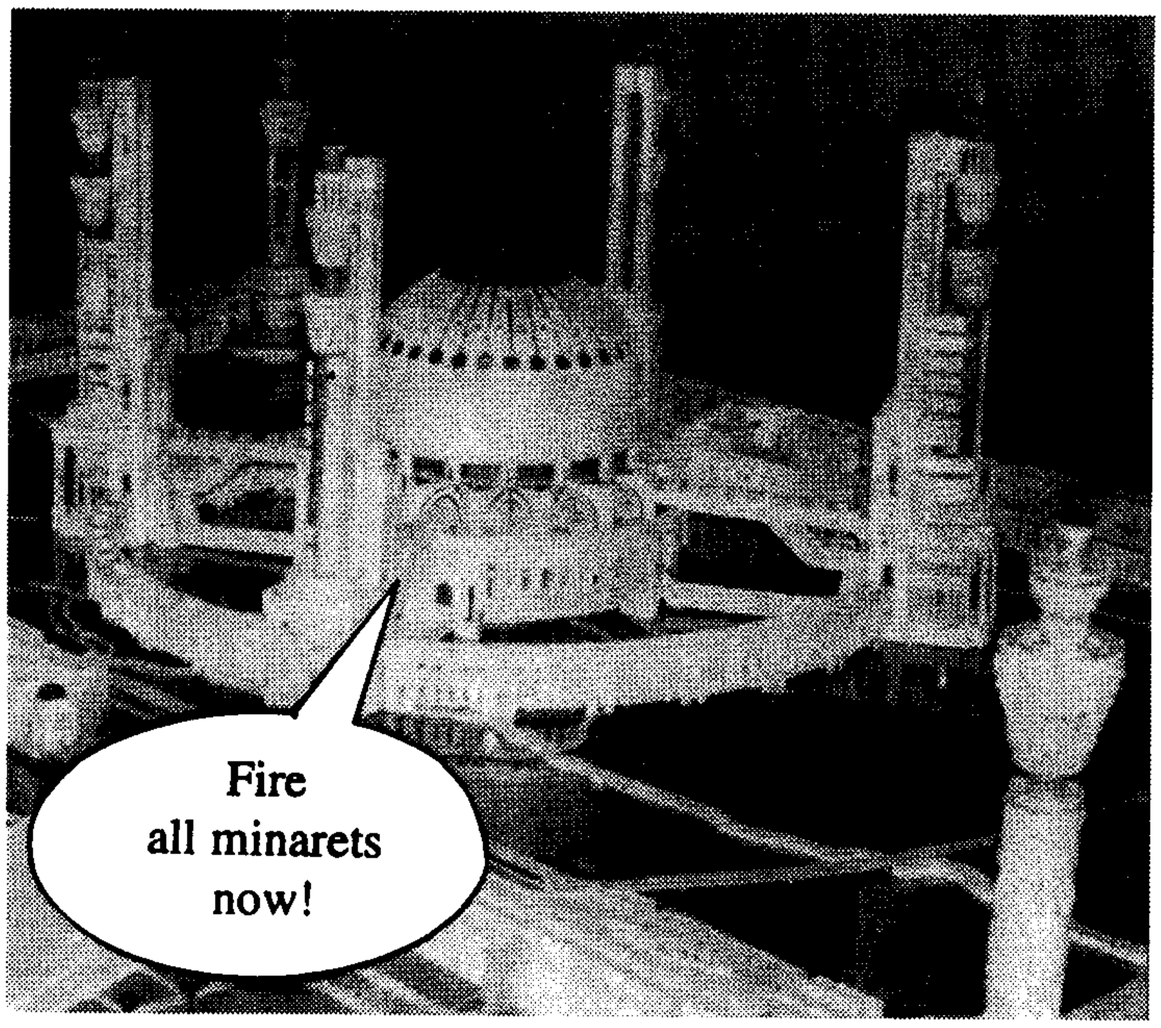
THE current breakdown of military discipline in Her Majesty's Forces, as evidenced in the court martial of the so-called Bonking Brigadier and the Randy Wren, is a direct consequence of the decision to admit heterosexuals to the ranks of the fighting elite.

Those of us who have constantly warned that such people could not keep their hands off each other and that it was in the nature of the heterosexual to jump on whoever was nearest have been proved all too correct.

Historically, services such as the Royal Navy have had a policy of recruiting only homosexuals, resulting in a glorious tradition of maritime supremacy. One has only to think of Nelson's order at the Battle of Trafalgar, "Kiss Me Hardy" to realise that *(cont. p. 94)*



NEW MOSQUE TO BE BUILT FOR SADDAM



The Eye's Exciting New Feature!

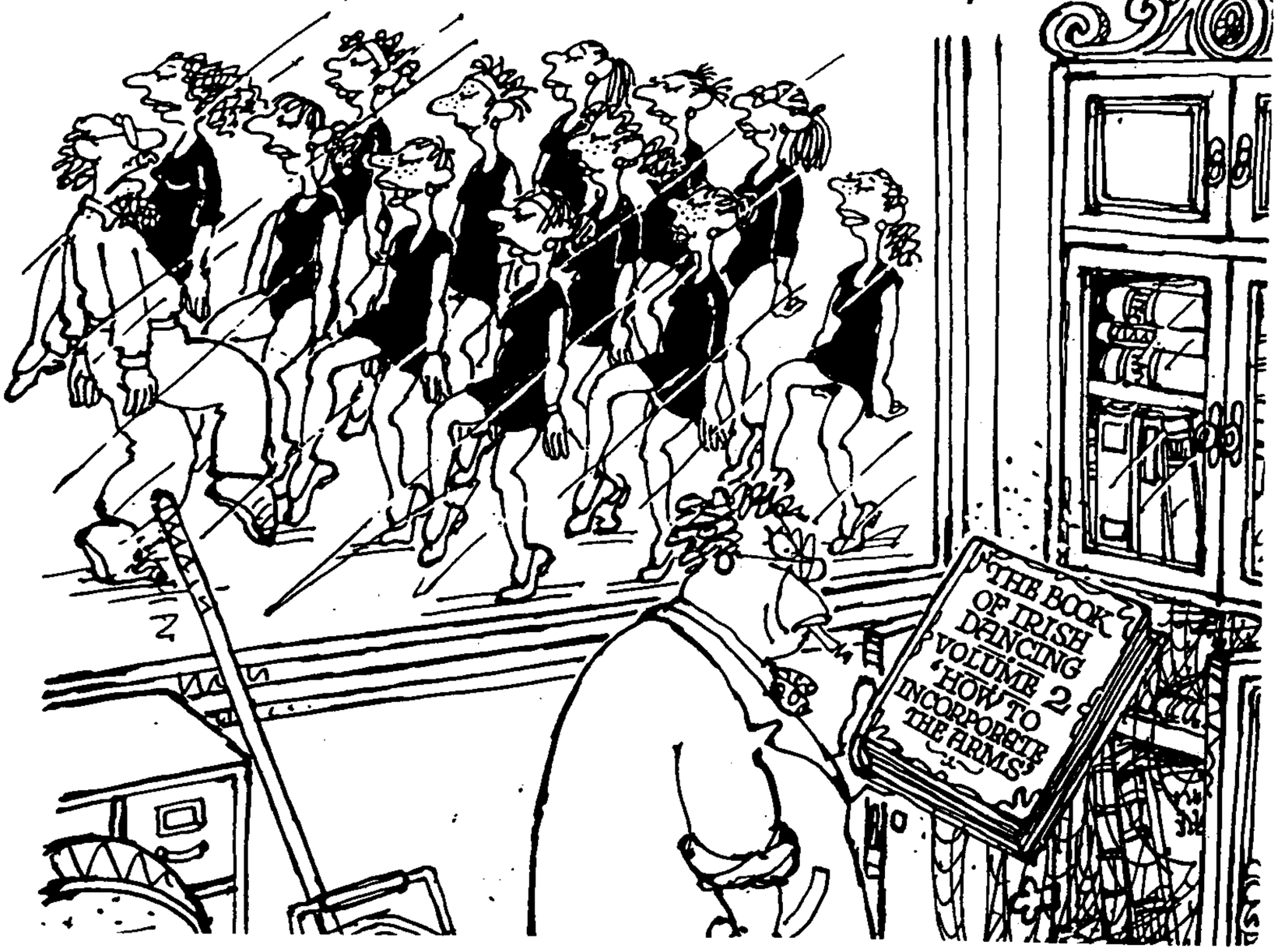
MODERN MANNERS

Dear Eye,

I'm a newspaper editor anxious to gratify my readers' desire to feel socially superior. How can I do this without patronising them?

This is very difficult. What I suggest you do is hire a journalist from a slightly snobbish magazine and get him or her to write answers to improbable social problems sent in by fictitious readers. The answers can be inaccurate or hopelessly impractical but this doesn't matter. The important thing is that your readers will get a rosy glow of self-satisfaction because they can pretend they know it all already and *(continued in section 94 of all newspapers)*

Whilst doing a long-overdue clearout at the offices of Ireland's oldest and most respected school of dance, Mrs O' Hara made a terrible discovery...



POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam: Tammy Wynette, the Queen of Country and Western

So. Farewell then
Tammy Wynette.

Famous country
And western
Singer.

"Stand by your man" –
That was your
Catchphrase.

And, with all five of
Your husbands,

You did.

E.J.T.H.R.I.B.B. (17½)

Yes! It's Britain's

BLAIRZONE

Newest Fanzine

NOOZ UP-DATE

IT'S TRUE! Throbbin' Robin Cook, Blairzone's own "Sexy Thang", has broken the hearts of a billion chicks by settling down. Yes, Robin's gone and got hitched and this time it's for keeps — his ex-wife gets to keep everything!

So hold on to your knickers girls — from now on it's socks, rugs and arctic rolls for Blairzone's Bearded Bastard (surely "Babe Magnet"? Ed.).

Talking Point ★

Is Blairzone roadie, Big Al Campbell, an official member of the band? Or wot?

Rumour has it that Campbell secretly pens most of the band's lyrics. So when anyone gets the words wrong Big Al comes round and beats them up. And it doesn't matter who — Big Al's not scared of a fight with Mad Frankie Field or even glamrock vocalist Harriet Harman!

So should the man they call "Yes Mr Campbell" be allowed to throw his weight around behind the scenes?

Says Tone, "Big Al is way out of order. Which is fine because I told him to be. Now shut up or he'll come round and throw your sound system out the window."

☆ ★ ★

Tone's Thought For Britain Today

"It's Coo-ooo-ooo-ooo-l for Ca-aa-aa-ts! It's cool for cats" — words by the late great Coolz Holland of Squeeze: UK. Think about it!

Trax

What Ali's advising the band to listen to — or else:

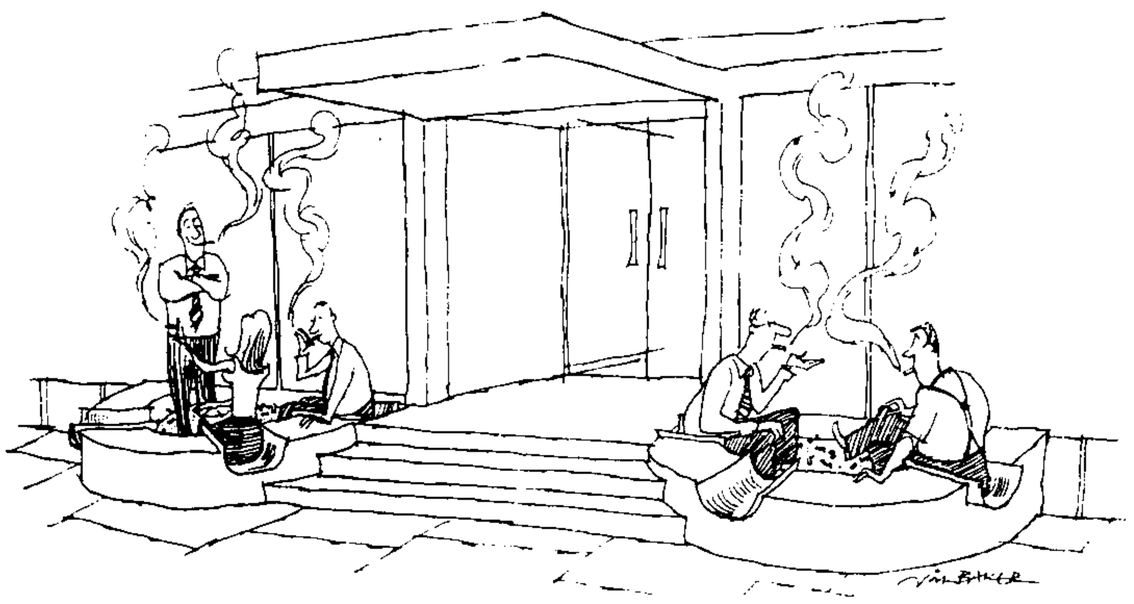
★ My Way

☆ ***Shaddapuppayaface***

★ On Message in a Bottle

☆ ***I'd like to teach the world to sing (in Harriet Harmony)***

★ ☆



NEW CURRIE FEAR SWEEPS UK

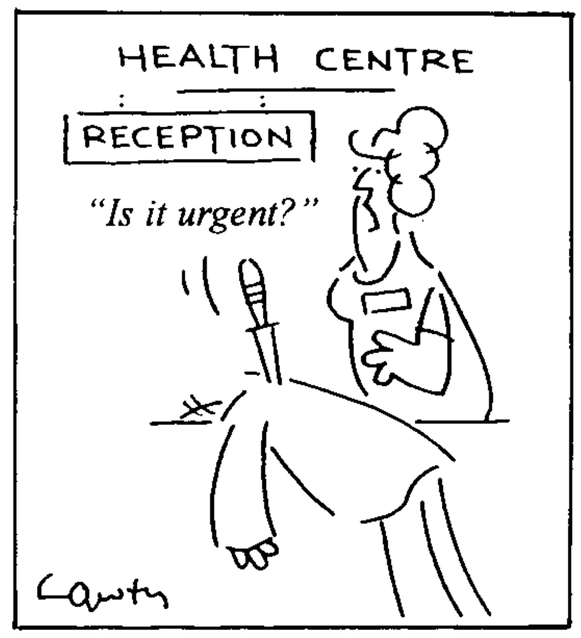
by Our Science Staff
Health-Scary Spice

THERE was growing concern yesterday that Britain was about to suffer a renewed outbreak of Edwina Currie, who had been thought to be "completely eliminated" after the scare of 1988.

There had over the years been a number of isolated incidents of Currie on Any Questions and at booksignings, but nothing on the scale of the previous epidemic, which left millions suffering from nausea and depression.

Many people were unable to leave their beds for weeks after contact with Currie.

Last week, however, scientists



confirmed that Currie was once again threatening to engulf the country. However, a Government spokesman assured the public that they were not at risk from Currie provided they took sensible precautions, such as:

- **cancelling their newspapers;**
- **turning off the television and radio;**
- **eating huge quantities of eggs** *(Shurely shome mishtake? Ed).*

The Life Of St Margaret Of Thatcher

by TV's Charles Moore
(What you will read exclusively in the Year 2007 Millennium Bug permitting)

Chapter One

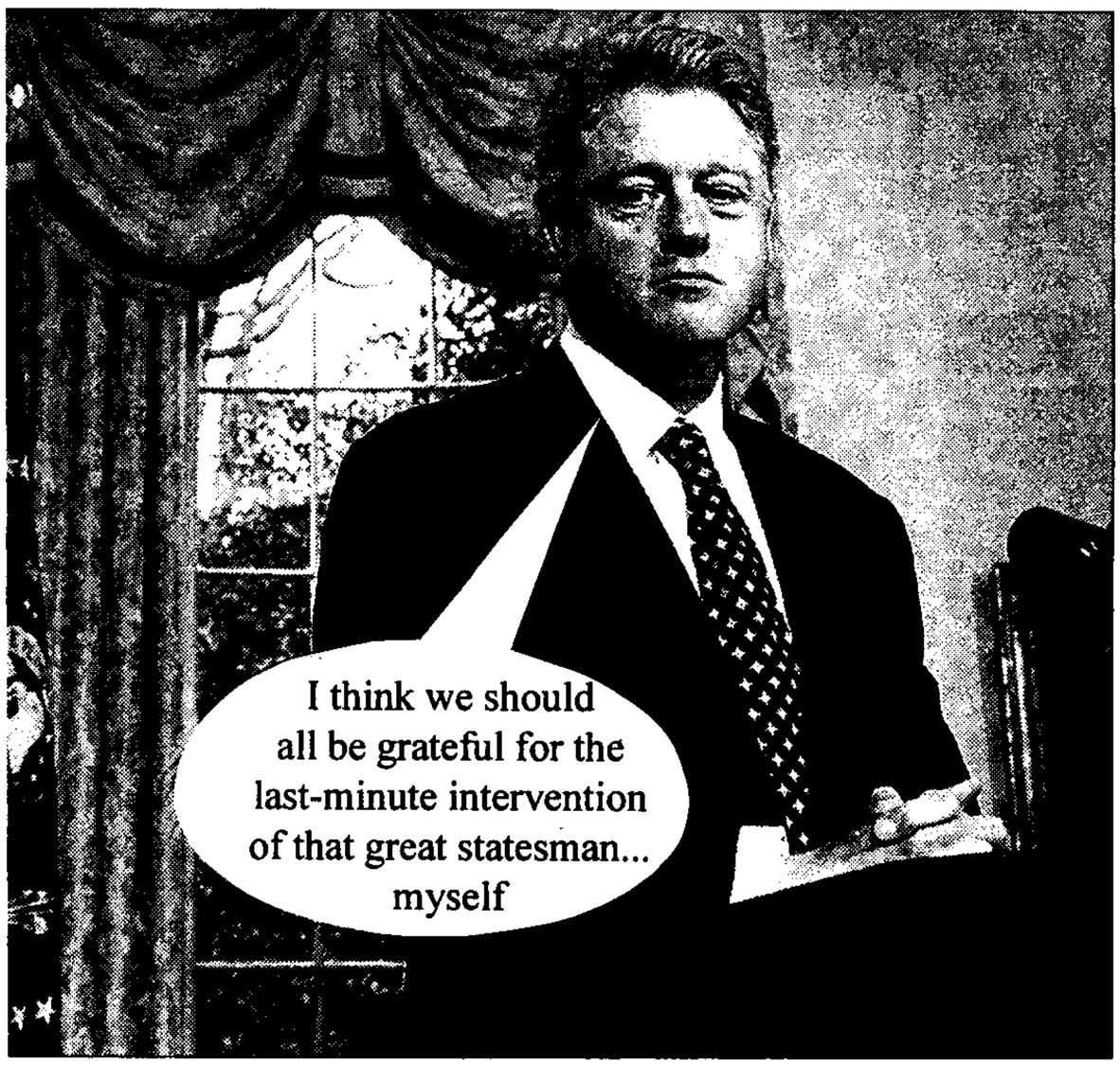
And lo, there was a star in the East, and it came to rest over a certain grocer's shop in Grantham.

And the angel of the Lord came unto the wife of the Alderman and said unto her "Fear not, for thou art blessed among grocers' wives.

"For you are to conceive and bear a daughter. And her name shall be called Wonderful, Privy Counsellor, the Everlasting Thatcher, the Supreme Ruler of the Universe. Especially by Charles Moore." *(Not to be continued.)*

CLINTSTONE FLIES UNDONE

(shurely 'in'? Ed.)



'RECOVERED MEMORY SYNDROME IS BOGUS'

by Our Medical Staff **Dr Spin**

HUGE numbers of people in Britain are suffering from false memories, according to Mr Tony Blair, the Downing Street specialist.

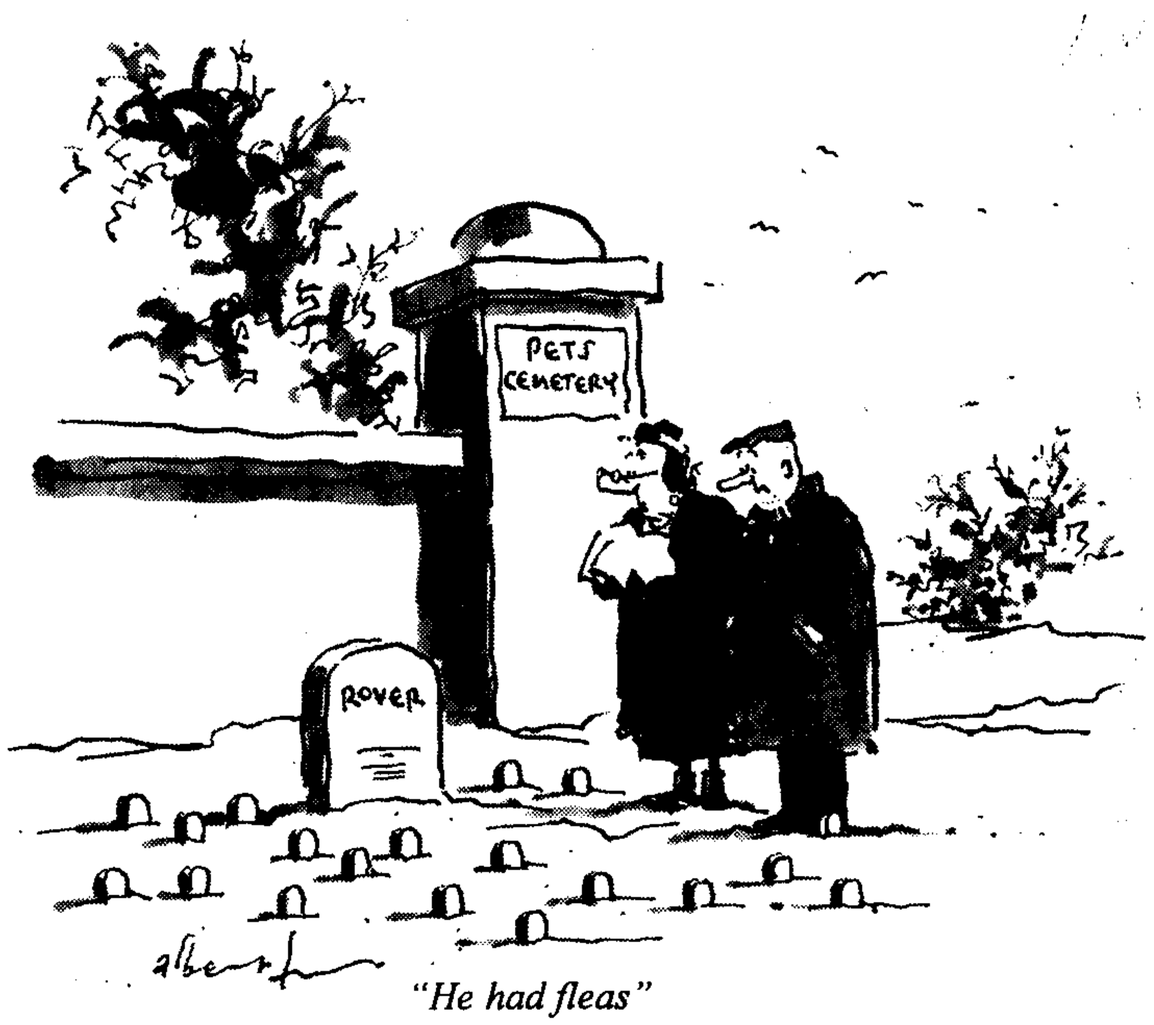
"It is a sad fact," said Mr Blair, "that too many members of the public remember the Labour party standing for social justice, equality and the redistribution of wealth."

Forget me note

"They are deluding themselves," he continued. "These recollections are entirely erroneous and are merely fantasies encouraged by unscrupulous so-called 'experts' using them to prove their own dubious theories."

He concluded, "The Labour party has *always* stood for wealth creation, private enterprise and an end to the welfare state.

"Anyone who remembers otherwise will soon find that I have forgotten about them completely when it comes to the reshuffle."



"He had fleas"

TV HIGHLIGHTS

THE WESTMINSTER CHRONICLES

by Anthony Trollope

(adapted for television by the Daily Telegraph)

IN TONIGHT's episode the overbearing new Dean (played by Wesley Carr) finally overreaches himself by sacking the Abbey's saintly organist (nicely underplayed by Martin Neary). The choirmaster is accused of unspecified "financial irregularities" relating to the New Cassock Appeal Fund, the sum of 4/6 having mysteriously gone missing. News of these disturbing events in the Abbey Close is leaked to both The Thunderer and the Prime Minister (a somewhat over-the-top performance by Tony Blair). The Conservative leader sends his wife (a superbly frosty cameo by Cherie Booth) to confront the Dean at his "illegal" one-man Disciplinary Tribunal. By now the events at Westminster have become a major national scandal. Will the Queen step in and sack the bullying Dean?

Cast In Full

Her Majesty The Queen	**Prunella Scales**
The Prime Minister	**Neil Pearson**
Cherie Booth QC	**Frances Barber**
Dr Neary	**Derek Nimmo**
The Dean	**Barry Took**
Man In Pew	**Sir David Frost**

How Cool Are You?

Do this test to find out if you're fit to live in Tony Blair's Britain!

1. Is your favourite film:
a) *The Full Monty?*
b) *In Which We Serve?*

2. Is your favourite band:
a) Oasis?
b) The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra?

3. Is your favourite novelist:
a) Nick Hornby?
b) William Makepeace Thackeray?

4. Is your favourite model:
a) Kate Moss?
b) Airfix's HMS Victory?

5. Is your favourite TV programme:
a) *The Teletubbies* starring Tinky-Winky?
b) *Civilisation* starring Sir Kenneth Clark?

6. Your favourite designer is:
a) Stella MacCartney of Chloe
b) Mr Wainwright of Marks & Spencer

7. Is your favourite artist:
a) Damien Hirst?
b) Sir Frederic Leighton RA?

8. Is your favourite team:
a) Arsenal FC?
b) The Royal Naval Field Gun "A" Squad (Pompey)?

9. Is your favourite Prime Minister:
a) Tony Blair?
b) William Pitt the Younger?

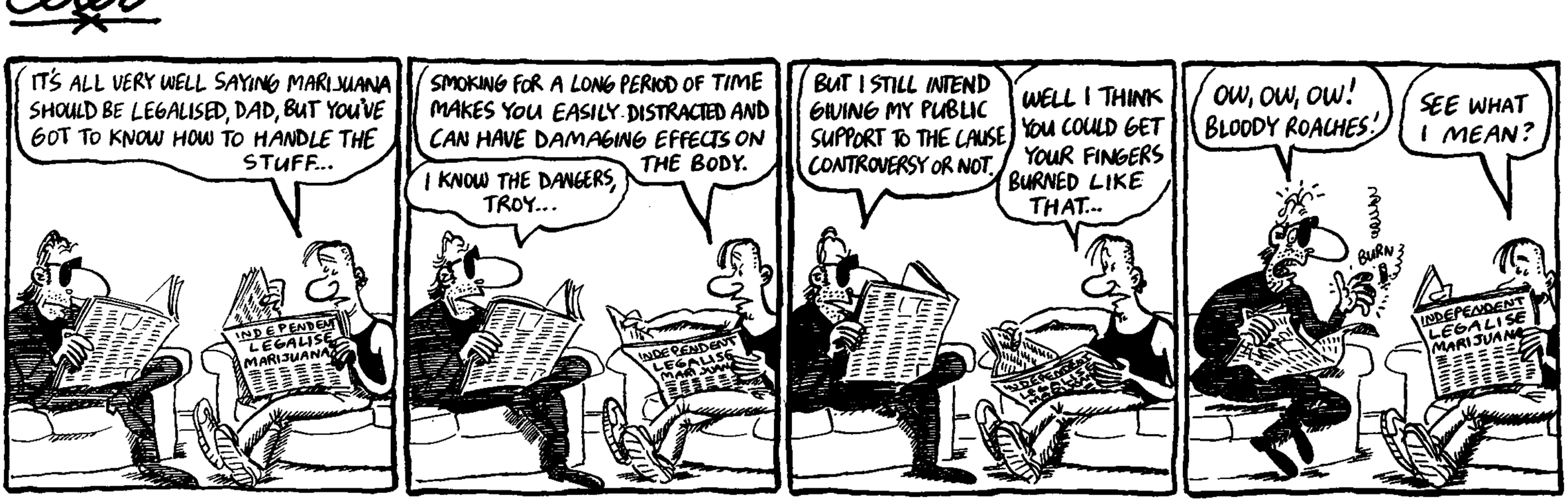
10. Your favourite media personality is:
a) Rupert Murdoch
b) Lord Reith

How you score:

All 'a's — Congratulations! You are Alastair Campbell! Cool!

All 'b's — You're on the next plane out of here! Uncool!

©Ben Elton


IT'S ALL VERY WELL SAYING MARIJUANA SHOULD BE LEGALISED, DAD, BUT YOU'VE GOT TO KNOW HOW TO HANDLE THE STUFF...
INDEPENDENT LEGALISE MARIJUANA
SMOKING FOR A LONG PERIOD OF TIME MAKES YOU EASILY DISTRACTED AND CAN HAVE DAMAGING EFFECTS ON THE BODY.
I KNOW THE DANGERS, TROY...
INDEPENDENT LEGALISE MARIJUANA
BUT I STILL INTEND GIVING MY PUBLIC SUPPORT TO THE CAUSE CONTROVERSY OR NOT.
WELL I THINK YOU COULD GET YOUR FINGERS BURNED LIKE THAT...
OW, OW, OW! BLOODY ROACHES!
BURN
SEE WHAT I MEAN?
INDEPENDENT LEGALISE MARIJUANA

SHOULD PAEDOPHILES BE ALLOWED TO ROAM FREE ALL OVER BRITAIN'S MEDIA?

by Our Paedophile (formerly News and Current Affairs) Staff

QUESTIONS were being asked by indignant pressure groups last night, following the release of hundreds of newspaper articles about paedophiles into the community.

"Are any of our children safe?" asked a typical parent. "I open the newspaper, turn on the radio, switch on the television, and there they are, large as life, in our own home.

"Why can't these editors just keep these pieces under control and out of sight on page 25?"

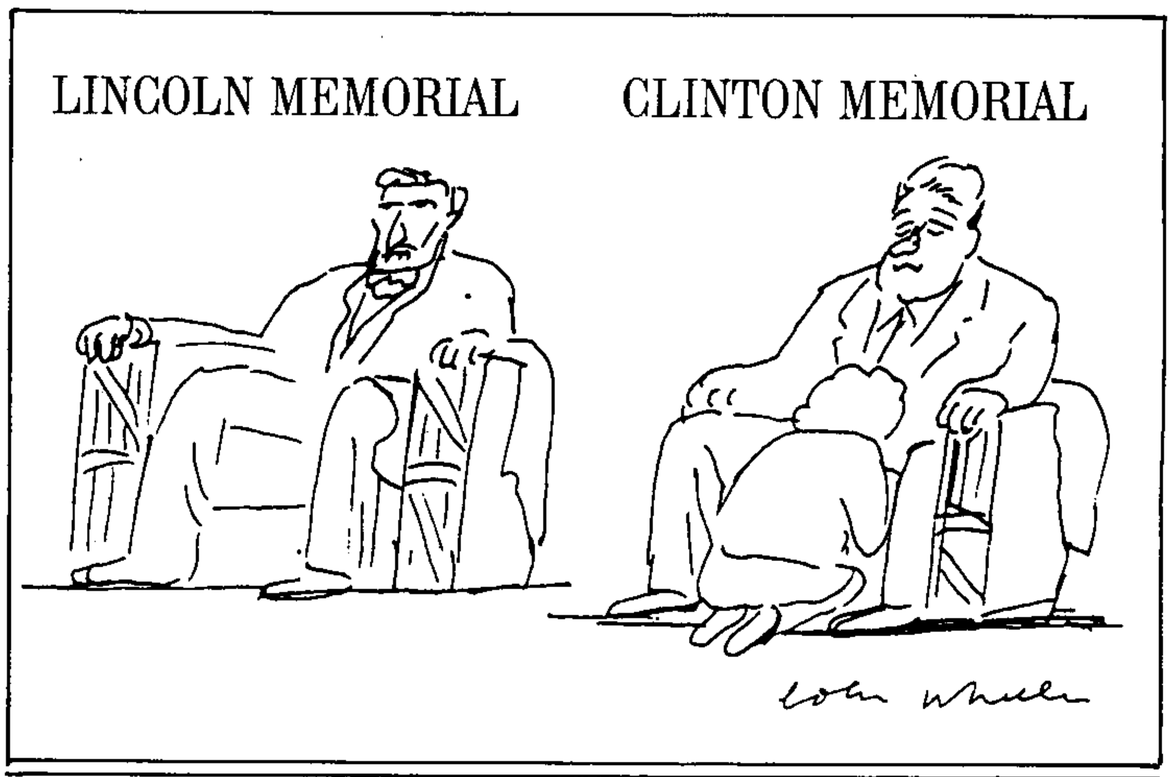
"It is a national scandal," agreed one childcare expert. "Our kids are these days being daily exposed to the most graphic and salacious accounts of paedophilia on every side, with no protection at all."

But newspaper editor Mr Kevin McFilth hit back by pointing out that "This kind of material fills newspapers and attracts readers.

"Any attempt to clamp down on paedophile coverage would be a gross infringement of the basic human right to make money."

LATE NEWS

Thousands more pieces on paedophiles to be released next week. *(P.A.)*



A Doctor writes

AS A doctor I am often asked: "Doctor, have you got any spare body parts I can have?"

The simple answer is: "Yes, of course. There are some arms and legs over there and a head in the fridge. Help yourself, they won't object as they're all dead. Ha ha ha."

What happens is that the artist, or *Sicco sculptoris modernis*, to give him his full medical term, is suffering from an acute desire to mess about with corpses.

The doctor, having trained as a medical student and done something similar during rag week, can find nothing wrong with this request.

He therefore tells the artist to take a couple of limbs twice a day until he gets arrested and jailed.

If you're worried about your remains winding up on public display, then so you should be.

© A. Doctor

Harry Enfield's **Bores** Drawn by **Michael Heath** **No. 34 The Millennium Bug**

"Apparently it's going to affect everything apparently the stock market will be re-valued at a hundred thousand guineas seven shillings & thruppence half penny apparently the only safe way to protect your money is to buy gold but apparently at midnight 1st Jan even household appliances like your fridge will think they're at war with the South African Boers so don't buy Krugerrands buy Russian Gold although apparently Lenin will warm up & start to smell & apparently all the sprinklers will go on at Woolworth's for two months & the reservoirs will dry up & apparently Trevor McDonald will read the News at Ten for Thursday 6 Jan 1900 apparently there'll be multiple pile ups on the motorways as all our airbags explode & apparently all the telephones will ring the correct number for the codes that set off the nuclear bombs but apparently the nuclear bombs won't know they're nuclear bombs because they haven't been invented yet so it'll be alright apparently we've known this was going to happen for ages & apparently we could have sorted it out years ago but apparently we didn't & now it's going to cost billions to put right which apparently is still too little too late apparently it doesn't affect Apple Macs I've got an Apple Mac so I'll be alright..."

THE SATURDAY TIMES
SECTION 95 REPAINT YOUR HOUSE IN RANCID FAT
SHES RICHER AND HAPPIER THAN YOU!!!
MORE MUCH MORE P95
MAN ATE WIFE
JARVIS

DIARY

LORD ARCHER'S CAMPAIGN DIARY

I stood with John Major in his garden at Huntingdon on the morning of the General Election.

It was a worrying time for the 3 of us — but he had come to value my company for 6 things:

My transparent integrity.

My political nous.

My ability to communicate.

And my way with words.

Yes, I wasn't afraid to tell it to him like what it was — and, like Margaret Thatcher, President J.F. Kennedy and Nelson Mandela before him — he respected me for it.

"What's going to happen, Jeffrey?" said the Prime Minister, through misty eyes, his voice trembling.

I looked the guy straight in the eye. I was good at looking people straight in the eye. I gained a blue at it when I was a scholarship student at Harvard University — the youngest ever.

He expected the truth — and I was the man to give it to him.

"You've got to face up to it, Prime Minister. You're gonna win. That much is clear. But it might be by a slightly reduced margin."

He looked me straight in the eye.

"Jeffrey," he said, "When the time comes, I want you to take over from me as Prime Minister. You've got a lot to offer this country of ours — and, by God, Jeffrey, *we need you.*

This was virtually word-for-word what the great Winston Churchill had told me when I had the immense privilege of meeting him in 1965.

The great man had taken me on as his Political Advisor after I had served a brief but record-breaking spell as the youngest-ever Professor of Economics at the LSE.

And when Winston told me this back then in 1956, I replied as I did to John Major.

"My one ambition in life," I said, "is to serve the people of London as their mayor. I can bring to the task 7 important qualities: energy, determination — and dedication.

"I have already proved myself as the youngest-ever yachtsman to sail single-handedly across America.

"I stand before you today as the British and World Chess Champion, the BBC Sports Personality of the Year, and the proud winner of the Prix Goncourt.

"But I would sacrifice each and every one of these honours if it meant I could serve the ordinary, decent people of Greater London. Pass me that baton, sir — and I will run away with it."

Winston died in my arms later that day — but I shall never forget his parting words.

He looked me straight in the eye and said, "Jeffrey — the ordinary, decent people of London deserve a Mayor like you. It is my dying wish, Jeffrey, that you become Mayor in the year 2000."

And with that Winston passed away — but not before he had given me a useful tip to invest in Anglia TV shares.

Little did the chattering classes realise when they criticised me for buying those shares that the person they were really criticising was the late, great Winston Churchill.

So when I ask to be considered for election as the Mayor of London, it is with the backing not only of John and Winston — but also of my close friend His Holiness Pope John Paul 11, under whom I was once privileged to serve as the youngest-ever Cardinal.

In recent months, many of my close friends have come to me and said, "Why bother, Jeffrey, you will only receive endless criticism from the chattering classes who will go to any extreme to stop you gaining the final prize."

I have looked them straight in the eye. "I have received over 2 million letters from the ordinary, decent people of London imploring me to stand," I have replied in all humility, "And in the same time I have raised over £350,000,000 for charitable causes.

"I would not be being true to my background as one of the nation's premier aristocrats (my great-grandfather was the Duke Ellington) if I were to succumb to the knockers and ignore these 3 million letters. It's not for nothing that I am the proud holder of three Lonsdale Belts, you know!"

What can I deliver to the people of London? £2,000 in a plain brown envelope, yes — but that's not all. With my 90-strong research team, I have uncovered major solutions to the serious problems faced by London.

After spending 3 months with my close friend Mayor Giuliani of New York, I have discovered that London faces crime and social problems.

After 6 months with my close friend, name forgotten add in asap, the Mayor of Athens, I have discovered that London faces problems in education and transport.

I have immediately set my 300-strong team of researchers onto the job. And these are our clear-cut and far-sighted solutions — tested and approved by up to 2000 world experts.

Transport — More vehicles on the roads equals more traffic. It's as simple as that.

Education — Our children will only learn more when they are taught more. It's as simple as that.

Crime — The only way to cut back on crime is to take steps to reduce it. It's as simple as that.

Social problems — Poverty is not caused by money — it's caused by lack of money. It's as simple as that.

Having been Lord Mayor of London some time in the early 1970s — and one of the most successful ever in the post, I will have you know — or so my close friend Boris Yeltsin tells me! — I know that, with the help of my 2,000-strong research team, I have the sheer experience to roll up my sleeves and tackle the job once more.

It'll be tough, yes — but no tougher than my (admittedly modest) achievements in becoming the first-ever Briton to climb Mount Everest and winning the Pulitzer Prize three years running!

Vote Archer for Mayor — and stand a chance of winning up to £5,000,000 in my £2,000,000 prize draw!

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

FRIARS REQUIRED for busy fish & Chips restaurant. Full training given.

Brighton Evening Argus

CLASS TWO DRIVER, willing to mate, must be reliable, nights out. (01952)

Shropshire Star

PHNOM PENH: Decomposed co-Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh was sentenced to 30 years imprisonment

The Times of India

Literary Review

Bloke Morrison

Too True
Blake Morrison
(Granta, £9.99)

BACK in the dawn of time young Blake Morrison was an aspiring poet — a goodish one, too — and the author of a very decent study of the literary '50s, working on the *Observer* books pages and waiting for Terry Kilmartin to retire as their editor.

Not long after Kilmartin's departure, and his own consequent elevation, he jumped ship to the newly floated *Independent on Sunday*, but got fired in one of the numerous cost-saving exercises of the early 90s. Clearly it was time to find something else to pay the mortgage on the Morrison domicile in SE3.

Help appeared in the shape of the male confessional school of Britlit, of which Blake was an early, but not quite the original, exponent. *And when did you last see your father?* (1993) was about his dad — *the* male confessional theme of the 90s; last year's *As If* took on children — the other male confessional theme of the 90s — in the context of the Bulger case. Each sold nicely, and one imagines that Granta won't be expecting too many copies of this volume of selected journalism to end up in the remainder dealer's bin.

The drawbacks of *Too True*, though, are twofold. One is to do with the taxonomic strain imposed by the form, that deadly compulsion to arrange a rag-bag of old articles into supposedly coherent categories. Thus section two, which harbours a piece about a woman who turned up on his doorstep with an unpublishable manuscript, profiles of Valerie Eliot and Ted Hughes, and some thoughts on Penelope Leach, is grandly filed as "Public Fictions, Private Lives". The second drawback, however, is more fundamental.

Basically — and I wouldn't *dream* of being ageist — Blake (b.1950) was conceived ten years too soon. There he sat, you feel, all through the grown-up 70s and 80s, meditating his rather good little pieces about Philip Larkin, itching to write about sex, footie and all the other fondly recalled memories of his youth, but sadly conscious that there wasn't a market for it. Suddenly, though, it was the 90s, the style supplements were full of wide-eyed male solipsists, and even fortysomethings — given the approximate adjustments to style and vantage point — could get in on the act.

Or just about. *Too True* simply bristles with the kind of thing that currently decorates the fashionable men's magazines (in fact a look at the acknowledgments confirms that a certain amount of it first appeared in the fashionable men's magazines). Blake on football (Burnley FC, which must be something of a first); Blake on his old university; Blake on pornography (whose basic problem, he concludes, having bravely monitored some multi-organ rumpus or other, is "boredom"); Blake on ex-girlfriends. Sex, inevitably turns up a lot: the first girl he slept with; the one he looked up after 20 years (a larky piece, this, with an alternative "fantasy" ending). All nicely ironical, too — the third male confessional theme of the 90s — with the author gamely getting his self-deflation in first.

Happily, it's not all like this. Or not quite. As I say, the book's criticism is just fine (odd, though, that nearly everything Blake touches happens to be published by Faber). Best of all, there's a rerun for a recent *Granta* piece called "Bicycle Thieves", in which Morrison junior's bike gets nicked and father, resolving to retrieve it from the ghoulish estate down the road, misidentifies his target — sharply observed stuff, with the reader egging the writer on. Alas, though, Morrison the journalist is better as a concerned dad than as a middle-aged lad, and the jacket of *Too True* — a nostalgia montage of cigarette cards and brass threepenny bits — might more tellingly have displayed an effigy of Peter Pan.

What You Didn't Miss, Part 94

An exclusive extract from NICK HORNBY's About Myself Again *(shurely A Boy? Ed.) (Gonadz, £15.99).*

WILL Goodbloke sat in the cafe on Upper Street — they'd just come back from a browse in Retro-Vinyl and he was still upset about missing that La's album — drinking cappuccino out of a styrofoam cup. He wondered about styrofoam. Was it a sort of plastic that they boiled up in vats, or just a kind of waterproof cardboard? It was funny there was never anything about it on TV, he thought. Angie looked up from telling him about her ex's psoriasis and said:

"You're very quiet."

"Yeah."

"Any special reason?"

Right. Will knew she wanted to talk to him in that way women sometimes did, while you wanted to watch a crap Steve Martin film or eat barley sugars.

"Umm... It's just that I never get any proper dialogue."

"You don't?"

"Well, we're in a Nick Hornby novel aren't we? It's just" — he knitted his brows together thoughtfully so she could see he really meant it — "your everyday banalities. I mean, the things people say, you know."

She smiled at him in that smiley way. "That's right. But redeemed by the sincerity of the way we say them, I suppose."

"Yeah."

"It's like our, well, thought processes too. The way we just, you know, think the mundane things people think, about oh, I don't know, guys and sex. And sex and guys. Oh and kids of course."

God, Will thought. He'd seen that coming. The conversations at the Sad Thirtysomething Bachelors Support Group in Tufnell Park had certainly sharpened him up.

"Do you mind?" she asked. "About the kids, I mean?"

"No," he said, thinking regretfully about that La's album and wondering if you could get it by mail-order. "Fucking A really. Do you mind if I cry a bit though?"

"I've got a handkerchief somewhere."

He knew then, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that the reviews were going to be OK.

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ ODD goings-on at the Weekend Telegraph books pages, which on 4 April — a good 10 days before the novel was published — ran a lavish feature on David Caute's self-produced and supposedly "controversial" Fatima's Scarf. This included not only an encomium by Maggie Gee but disparaging remarks about the many publishers who had turned the original manuscript down and the hauling in of Book Trust supremo Martyn Goff to suggest that the Booker panellists would have to think about calling it in.

Curiously, other early reviewers, notably the *New Statesman*'s and the *Guardian*'s, were much less convinced of the book's merits. So why should the *Telegraph* bother to hype a self-published novel written by a cross-grained old leftie of Caute's vintage?

The answer of course is that *Fatima's Scarf* is a satire on the Rushdie affair (in this case the trouble is started by an Egyptian novelist called "Gamal Rahman" and his novel *The Devil: An Interview*). The *Telegraph*, in case you don't remember, has loathed Rushdie since his anti-Thatcher pronouncements of the mid-1980s and even at the height of the *fatwa*, when the novelist went in fear of his life, was producing sneering editorials about "little Salman". Hence the bizarre spectacle of column inches, mighty puffs and gossip about Caute's non-existent Booker chances.

'Bookworm'

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
IT'S ALL ABOUT HOW BLOKES CAN'T SUSTAIN A RELATIONSHIP
THE NEW NICK HORNBY!
NICK HORNBY ABOUT A BOY
YEAH - I USED TO LOVE HIS STUFF BUT I'VE GONE OFF HIM
HORNBY!

footnotes

ROAD ROUGHSHOD

THE main reason for building the M11 link road in north-east London at such appalling cost to the people who lost their homes was the alleged "net benefits".

In 1991 the department of transport carried out a "cost benefit analysis" on 1988 prices which found that the "benefits" (cutting out traffic jams, etc) averaged out at £179.6m, while the estimated cost of building the road was £164m. So the road would produce a nice "anticipated net benefit" of £15.6m.

Whoops! The benefit quickly vanished as the road's costs shot up. The original £164m cost was "revised" by the roads quango, the Highways Agency, to £204m, leaving a nasty net overall deficit of £24.4m.

Asked by the national audit office (NAO) to explain how a £16m anticipated benefit to the public ended up as a £24m deficit, the embarrassed Highways Agency reckoned that its original figures could have been wrong. "Ideally," explained the agency, "any analysis should revisit the benefit assumptions and calculations, which might identify substantial additional benefits." Well, perhaps, but do they? The agency can't say, because they do not "routinely revisit the cost benefit analysis once a project has begun, and have not done so in this case".

The cost of the M11 has nearly doubled since it was first mooted in 1987. Where has all the extra money gone? A hefty slice of it went into the coffers of the consulting engineers, W.S. Atkins. In a letter to Harry Cohen MP, the NAO gives details of the £141m the taxpayer spent on the road on top of the original estimate. One big item is £21m, which is ascribed rather vaguely to "variations and additional construction resulting in additional costs of design and construction". The NAO explains this away as follows: "The consulting engineers are paid on a percentage of scheme working costs; if the construction costs increase, their fees increase pro rata". In other words, whenever the costs of the building work went up, for whatever reason, W.S. Atkins's fees went up accordingly.

Protestors against the M11 remember some of the more bizarre spending by W.S. Atkins. They recall £200,000 being lavished on a special public relations office, in which two well-paid W.S. Atkins enthusiasts fended off critical media inquiries. And then there were all those manly bailiff firms brought in to deal with protest demonstrations. The NAO puts £21.4m of the extra costs of the road down to "site security", which it argues was "unforeseen" in 1987. The £21.4m is qualified by a curious note: "cost until December 1997, 13.8m". So £7.6m was spent on "site security" in the few weeks after December, although not a single protester has been seen near the M11 for two years.

Private prisons: making a killing

UNLAWFUL killing of prisoners in jails run by the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) is not confined to Blakenhurst prison in Redditch, Worcestershire, where Alton Manning was strangled to death by warders in 1994 (see last *Eye*).

Prison Privatisation Report International reveals that in the last six weeks two prisoners, Bryson Chisley and Derrick Davies, have been murdered by fellow inmates at the CCA's Northeast Ohio Correctional Centre at Youngstown. A local court promptly savaged the company for "lacking in attention to the safety of the prison population" through its profitable policy of taking all prisoners offered. Exceptionally, an injunction was slapped on CCA banning it from taking any further prisoners. The CCA boss, a Dr Crants, blamed the whole affair on "rookie staff" which had been recruited on low pay by his own managerial colleagues.

This is the second blow for CCA in America in a year. Last June the company lost a South Carolina state contract to run a 400-bed juvenile prison. A report concluded that staff used "improper force" to restrain young prisoners. Warders regularly "hog-tied" prisoners — tying both their hands together to an ankle behind their backs.

But while CCA loses contracts in the US, it wins them in Britain. The very first act of Jack Straw after becoming home secretary on a policy opposed to prison privatisation was to extend the contract for UKDS, a CCA subsidiary, to run Blakenhurst for another three years. Almost at once he approved a contract for a new private prison at Agecroft, Manchester, to be run by, er, UKDS.

PS: A recent report by the prestigious share analyst Brian Rogers of San Francisco concludes that "the recent negative publicity... is overstated and should not impact the increasing trends toward privatisation of the corrections industry". Prison shares, he urged, "represent an excellent buying opportunity".

A JUMP AHEAD

■ THE government of Bahrain, which denies all human rights to anyone who opposes it, has sent a mission to the Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

Its star is the new legal adviser to the Bahraini ministry of the interior, Mr David Jump. Until his recent lucrative appointment, Mr Jump was a London solicitor at Trowers and Hamlin, a firm best known for its connections to the "river companies" through which the big money was funnelled secretly to the Tory party (see *Eye* 826). Perhaps to celebrate the hiring of Mr Jump by a show of faith in the rule of law, the Bahraini government has just dissolved the executive committee of the island's Bar Society. In its place comes a claque of brown-nosing, government-supporting lawyers under the leadership of Sheikh Isa bin Muhammad al-Khalifa, a member of the royal family.

High Principals

THE HUISH FUND

■ IN JUNE 1996 Paul Brennan was suspended as principal of Richard Huish college in Taunton.

An internal audit by Bristol accountants Bentley Jennison covering the years 1992-94 had raised a number of awkward questions about the college accounts. Another reason for his suspension was Brennan's "general management style", regarded by many staff as excessively abrasive.

In July 1996, after earnest discussions with college management, Mr Brennan resigned. He and the college agreed to say nothing more on the matter. In November 1997 Mr Brennan was appointed head of the sixth form centre at London's biggest further education college, City and Islington.

PAUL BRENNAN

Tom Jupp, City and Islington principal, says Brennan's record at Richard Huish "has been investigated". Asked whether he had seen any audit of Richard Huish, Mr Jupp replied: "My information is that all internal and external financial audits were unqualified during Paul Brennan's time".

Pretty well the entire teaching staff at City and Islington have written to Mr Brennan protesting about his management style. Asked about all this, Mr Jupp said: "I know your column. I expect you think you may have a story of sleaze and managerialism at City and Islington College. I would point out that we were the first college in London to negotiate a local contract with NATFHE [the lecturers' union]."

MASON'S HAUL

■ WHY HAS Professor Stan Mason been sacked from his job as principal of Glasgow Caledonian University? He has followed to the letter the three basic rules for principals of modern further and higher education.

1. Look after your family. The professor's two sons, David and Andrew, were employed in the university's bulk solids handling unit (surplus last year, £8,000; bonuses for the nine employees, £31,000).

2. Enjoy your trips abroad. In 1993-95 the professor and three senior members of staff flew with their wives business class to South Africa and the Far East. "Debriefing sessions" were held over two days each in luxurious holiday resorts.

3. Get a flash motor. Prof Mason had two "prestige" cars. When he was taxed on the cars, the university stumped up £2,400 "garaging fees" to soften the blow.

LANKESTER BUMMER 2

■ SIR Tim Lankester, director of SOAS, appealed to his staff to draw deep on "the deep reservoir of goodwill and commitment" to erase a £1.6m deficit.

An impertinent lecturer asked whether Sir Tim himself would make a contribution from the 25 percent increase in his salary which brings it up to £103,000. Sir Tim said he wouldn't. Such a contribution, he explained, would be a "meaningless political gesture".

Who bombed the Israeli embassy?

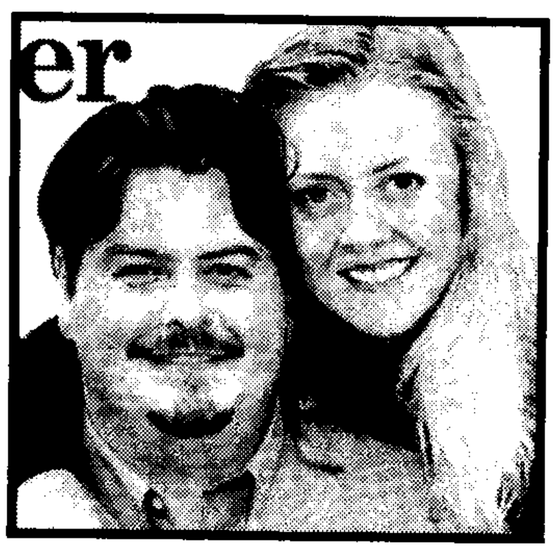
ANXIOUS negotiations continue between the British government and the former MI5 agent David Shayler, who defected last year, fled the country and told some juicy stories about the antics of MI5 to the *Mail on Sunday*.

The security services are specially worried that Shayler will expand on his most sensational revelation: that MI5 had a clear warning from "an impeccable source" that Israeli targets in London would be attacked by terrorists. In late July 1994, not long after the warning, which was ignored, the Israeli embassy in London and an office block in Finchley, which houses the Zionist federation, were blown up by terrorist car bombs, one in an Audi, the other in a Triumph Acclaim. Miraculously, no one was killed.

The public official most worried by Shayler's revelation is the director of public prosecutions. If there was indeed a warning about the bombs, it would be crucial new evidence in the case against the two young Palestinians who were convicted of conspiring to carry out the bombings. The two, Samar Alami and Jawad Botmeh, have always protested their innocence.

Police traced the Audi which was used to bomb the Israeli embassy to its sale at an auction in Milton Keynes. The two men who bought the car, they were told, had arrived in a BMW with distinctive coloured stripes. Prodigious police research traced the BMW to Jawad Botmeh.

Botmeh eventually admitted helping to buy the Audi. The police promptly rounded up his friends and family, interviewed them and



MI5 DEFECTORS: David Shayler and Annie Machon

searched their homes. Nadia Zekra, the mother of one of Botmeh's footballing friends, seemed to resemblethe woman who was seen driving the bomb car up to the embassy. They interviewed a young woman, Samar Alami, a chemical engineer and friend of Botmeh's. The two friends admitted dreaming up crackpot schemes to fly chemicals and instructions for making explosives to the West Bank of the Jordan on remote-controlled aircraft. They had rented a lock-up near Heathrow where they stored maps and plans for their aircraft and chemicals for making explosives. They even made a couple of makeshift bombs there.

Detectives came across two more pieces of apparently incriminating evidence. Among the belongings of Samar's sister Randa they found what they quickly deduced was a map of Tally Ho Corner, Finchley, where the second bomb went off. Then they

discovered that a friend of Botmeh and Alami, Mahmoud Abu-Wardeh, had rented a truck of the type which picked up a huge consignment of chemicals. The chemicals, the police believed, could have been used to make both bombs. The clincher was the discovery that the Alami family car had been spotted in the same road as the Israeli embassy a few days before the bomb went off. This was, detectives concluded, evidence of a "dry run" for the real car bomb. Zekra, Abu-Wardeh, Botmeh and Alami were duly arrested, charged with conspiracy to cause the explosions, and put on trial from October to December 1996.

There were, however, big holes in the prosecution case. The evidence against Nadia Zekra was so slight that the judge ordered her acquittal before her defence was even heard. The truck hired by Abu-Wardeh could not be connected to any chemicals, so there was no case against him either. He was acquitted. The map of Tally Ho corner turned out to be a map of Sidon in the Lebanon. The Alami family car had indeed been seen in the street of the Israeli embassy. It was driven by Samar Alami's uncle who was going to have lunch with an old friend who lived next door to the embassy.

At the time of both bombings Jawad Botmeh was in Brighton. Samar Alami was phoning her sister's mother-in-law from Imperial College library at almost exactly the time the embassy was being bombed. Yet neither of the two remembered where they were at the time of the bombings, even though there was cast-iron proof of their whereabouts. The phone call from Imperial College, for instance, was recorded — though Samar Alami did not know that. "If they were in any way involved," says Gareth Peirce, their solicitor, "they would surely have remembered where they were when the bombs went off — but they couldn't, not for over a year, and then only after the most extensive inquiries."

There were still more problems with the prosecution case. The explosive made in the rented lock-up was TATP. Yet in her first analysis, the government's own expert from the Defence and Research Agency ruled out TATP as the explosive used in the bombings. The Israeli forensic

SAMAR ALAMI (left) and JAWAD BOTMEH

experts agreed with her. At trial, the experts were not so certain, but all the evidence pointed to a far more reliable explosive than TATP. And here was the fundamental flaw in the prosecution case. Botmeh and Alami were obviously inexperienced bunglers with explosives. The nearest they came to setting off an explosion was a futile attempt to blow up a tree in the Peak District. The London bombings in July 1994, on the other hand, were carried out with the most professional precision.

Who might have been involved? Alami and Botmeh explained in their evidence that from 1992 their paths crossed occasionally with a Palestinian they knew as Rida Al Mughrabi. In 1993 Botmeh had agreed to buy a Renault for Rida, and had travelled with him to an auction in Northampton. In 1994 Rida asked Botmeh to help buy another car. This time they went to Milton Keynes and bought the Audi, which some weeks later was used in the embassy bombing. There was plenty of proof that there was another man with Botmeh when the Audi was bought. The signature and unidentified fingerprints on the auction documents were not Botmeh's. Though the prosecution alleged without a jot of supporting evidence that Botmeh had bought the Triumph Acclaim which housed the Finchley bomb, the signature and the fingerprints on the Triumph's auction sale documents weren't his either. The same mysterious Rida gave Samar Alami a couple of boxes of the chemicals which were later found in the lock-up. He vanished soon afterwards never to reappear.

Despite the clearest possible evidence that another man known as Rida was involved, and had bought the Audi, Mr Justice Garland expressed his doubt whether Rida existed. "Is he real?" he asked. "Is his name a label for someone else or is he someone who has been invented in order to put in a story woven round things which cannot be denied"?

Such questions were hard to answer in the absence of any other defendants or any other story as to how and why the embassy was bombed. Though there was, as the judge admitted, not a shred of evidence to connect either defendant with the actual bombings, the jury convicted both of conspiracy to cause the explosions and they were sent to prison for 20 years.

David Shayler's revelation about the warning creates an entirely different picture to the one painted to the jury. A warning suggests an intelligence tip-off which in turn suggests the involvement of a foreign government or an international terrorist outfit. If, for instance, terrorists from Hezbollah or Hammas had been involved, perhaps with help from Iran or Syria, their methods would have been very similar to those employed by the London bombers in July 1994. A spy in either organisation could have passed on a warning of impending bombings. This is precisely what happened before another terrorist revenge bombing — of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie in 1988. For four months Gareth Peirce has been trying without success to prise out of the DPP the truth about any intelligence warning which she believes, could exculpate her clients and point the finger at more dangerous culprits.

NOT SO SAFE WAYS

■ **In 1993 crown post offices at Boscombe, Bournemouth, and Upper Edmonton, north London, were closed and the services "relocated" to Safeways food stores. Whoops! Both Safeways have now closed and the customers have gone.**

Post office services at Edmonton were shifted to a van in the Safeways car park and will soon be available at new premises in Fore Street. In Boscombe, the services continue from the same self-contained unit in the closed-down store. In both cases, Post Office Counters Ltd have had to supply new staff to replace Safeways staff.

A post office spokesman said that all this proved "how well we deal with changing circumstances". He added: "While we are willing to continue to answer your queries, I am puzzled and disappointed that you use very little of our replies. You are not giving anything like a balanced picture of the franchising operation which, I repeat, has given a great many customers a better service including longer opening hours and more convenient and accessible offices."

In the City

BE AFRAID... be very afraid. Big game hunter Stephen Boler is once again stalking the City. The man who has one of the greatest collections of stuffed investors on his wall has found a new game.

Fresh from the culling of shareholders in fitted kitchen, bedroom and bathroom disaster Limelight, Boler has emerged behind another retail business, Furnitureland, which is likely to follow the welltrodden Boler trail of seeking City investors or a bid.

Reassuringly it is said that Boler will not be involved in running the business. But history relates that this is never enough to save investors. Or even football fans, as supporters of Manchester City, where Boler is a major shareholder, have discovered as the former premiership club lurches towards relegation into the Nationwide Second Division.

Boler's presence on the board as a non-executive director — which he became at "Limescale" (because the shares are so hard to get rid of) after it went public — can be sufficient. Floated at 175p in November 1996, the shares are now 32p after an endless diet of profit warnings and losses.

Luckily for Boler the pain was lessened by the fact that he had already realised at least £65m from selling off Limelight shares before the flotation. True he was still left with 17 million shares on which he has taken a big hit. But he has not suffered the near total wipeout inflicted on those who signed up for the fairy story which soon became a nightmare peddled by Rothschilds and Cazenove.

Sales collapsed within three months of the flotation — an event which was clearly completely unpredictable for the directors and no doubt an unpleasant and complete surprise to Boler as a non-executive. Still, he is able to contemplate the wreckage from the comfort of tax exile in South Africa where he is developing a game reserve to preserve the endangered black rhinoceros in the Kalahari desert.

But those who have followed Boler's business career from before he discovered the profits to be made from fitted kitchens and the like have long learned, like the animals he hunts, that he is a man to avoid. He first surfaced in the retail tyre business almost 30 years ago. He sold his business to the market highflyer Albany Tyres in 1969. A year later he left the board amid rumours that his business had failed to perform as expected.

Boler next went into property and injected his new business into a "shell", G.A.Robinson. In 1973 Robinson acquired the Kwik-Fit tyre business started by Tom Farmer whom Boler had met at Albany. Two years later and Boler was on his way out of Robinson after unloading almost half his holding to Farmer. The Boler property and engineering interests had performed poorly and were run down. Robinson went on to become Kwik-Fit making Farmer a multi-millionaire. Boler, who retained a share stake, went abroad as a tax exile to start again.

By 1980 Boler was back and began his profitable love affair with fitted kitchens — an emotion which has rarely been shared by customers, creditors or shareholders. Boler bought the loss-making Kitchen Queen chain for £2.1m cash from the Manchester-based Moben furniture group, who took a big write-off on the sale. Boler intended to merge Kitchen Queen with his company Wharf Mill Furnishers which he had acquired earlier in 1980. However, continuing losses forced Wharf Mill into receivership in late 1980. Less than two years after he acquired Kitchen Queen that business too went into receivership due to mounting losses in February 1982.

But Kitchen Queen was soon Kitchens Direct, which Boler established later that year. Oddly it was only at this stage that the Limelight prospectus picked up the trail of Boler's success story. In 1984 Boler began a longterm relationship with another great generator of shareholder wealth and tax exile, Michael Ashcroft. Boler sold Kitchens Direct, in which he was the main shareholder, to Kean & Scott, part of Ashcroft's Hawley empire which later became ADT, for up to £22m, half up front.

Within six months the wheel came full circle when Ashcroft gobbled up the struggling Moben group to add its loss-making interests in kitchens and double glazing to the Sharps and Dolphin brand names it already owned. All of these plus Portland windows resurfaced in "Limescale".

Boler continued to run the businesses that would eventually form "Limescale" for ADT until 1987 when he left to work for himself. Two years later he acquired the Kitchens Direct and Moben businesses from ADT and in 1991 took over Dolphin and Sharps in a deal which saw Ashcroft become his backer.

BOLER: stalking the City

But by then another of Boler's ventures was causing problems for its purchaser. In 1987 Boler and others sold the Advanced Technology Industries security alarm business to Brown & Jackson for £800,000 plus an earn-out geared to profits over the next three years. This resulted in Boler and friends receiving £18m in preference shares. But soon after the three years was up, ATI began making losses and Brown & Jackson shareholders became uneasy over the favourable terms of the deal. Two Brown & Jackson directors were shareholders in ATI with Boler.

In February 1992 Boler and the two now ex-Brown & Jackson directors, Christopher Bailey and Bryan Duffy, bought 75 percent of ATI back in return for cancellation of more than £10.5m of the already issued preference shares. The trio kept the £8.8m realised from shares already cashed in. Brown & Jackson agreed to waive any claims against Boler and friends. Boler later bought the remaining 25 percent for £550,000.

Three years after putting "Limescale" together, Boler began to cash out. In November 1994 Schroder Ventures took a £35m stake ahead of the planned flotation. Boler was able to realise £23m while cutting his stake from around two-thirds to 50 percent. His old friend Michael Ashcroft was also able to cash in some of ADT's shares for £8m.

Two years later, in November 1996, Boler and Ashcroft cashed in again. Limelight acquired the private Boler interests for £183m in cash, shares and loan notes. Boler's near 50 percent stake was valued at £91m. He collected £43m in loan notes plus cash and a 16 percent share stake valued at almost £30m. ADT sold out its remaining 16 percent for £30m. Interestingly Boler, who had built up the business, ceased to have any executive role. It seems he was not seen as a selling point. The rest, as they say, is a very painful history.

"Man is a predator. Hunting is culling the surplus of the species", declares Boler. As an dendangered species, shareholders in "Limescale" know exactly what he means.

"Buy swords!"

NO SOONER was it suggested here that bucket shop veteran Tom Wilmot might have plans for US kerb market stock Peripheral Connections (*Eye* 948) than they are no longer plans. Peripheral, linked to Wilmot's old Harvard Securities chum Morton Glickman, announced last month that it had acquired Keymore, a London company which makes and sells the Skynet car tracking system. Wilmot acquired the Skynet business after the AIM-listed company burned out, but not before he and others had made a killing. Roll up, suckers.

'Slicker'

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"THEY ARRESTED ME AND STARTED BEATING ME TERRIBLY. THEY WANTED ME TO WALK THEM TO MY HOME BUT I WAS REFUSING. WE WENT THERE AND COLLECTED MY CLOTHES. THERE, THEY KILLED MY MOTHER." A 14 year-old girl taken in February 1997.

The girls are selected for their "beauty" and are routinely raped.

Both boys and girls are regularly beaten if they fail to follow orders.

Many are killed.

Sometimes, the children are forced to beat their friends to death.

"THE BOY WAS TOLD TO HIT OYET ONCE. THEN HE WAS TOLD TO HAND OVER THE AXE TO ANOTHER BOY WHO HIT OYET A SECOND TIME. AND THEN I WAS GIVEN THE AXE." A 15 year-old boy who was forced to deliver the axe blow which killed Oyet, a boy he knew.

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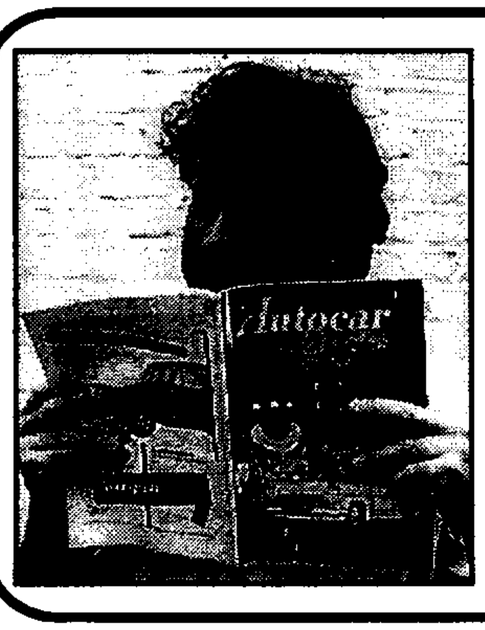

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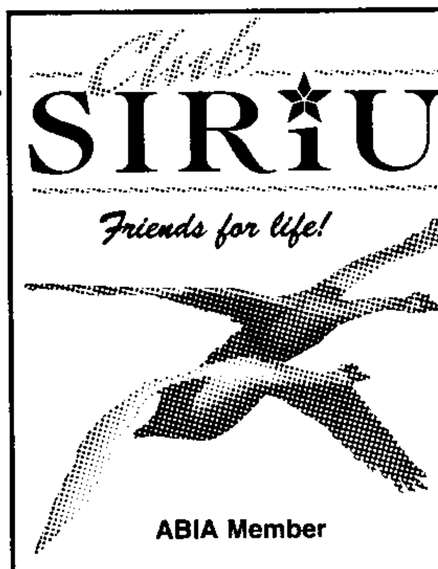

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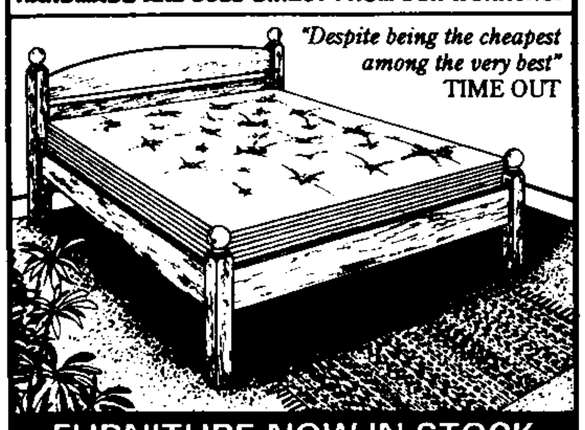

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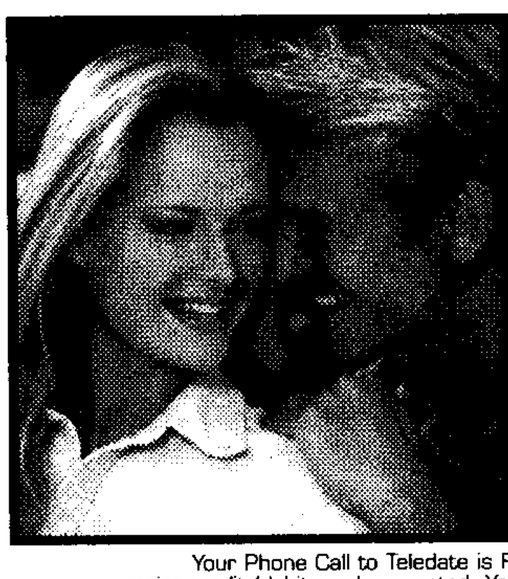

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DEEP HUMDINGER, male, 40, seeks lady deep humdinger. I'm creative, sensitive and don't look 40. Leicester. Box 0748.

TALL, DARK, HANDSOME male, 37, professional, seeks intelligent woman to meet for occasional coffee, lunch, fun. Box 0848.

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ART LOVER – successful male, 52, attractive, etc. tied etc, seeks female to share interest in art history and visits to galleries at home and abroad. Box 2548.

FEMALE CO-PILOT wanted for London-to-Brighton 2CV rally 3rd May 1998. Oh, and for sex, love and living happily ever after, too. You Must be able to put up with 38 year old smoker who likes pubs. For the record: I'm single, vaguely intellectual, professional, solvent, London SW. GSOH? Come on, I placed this ad, didn't I? Box 1748.

MODEST, FANTASTIC, good looking bloke, 33, seeks fun lady for fun friendship/romance. City/Essex. Box 1848.

MALE, 39, SLIM ATTRACTIVE, 6'1", single – WLTM N/S slim female under 5'6", 27-35ish. Interested, spontaneity, creativity, frivolity, entertainment and the occasional deep conversation. Box 1548.

HEALTHY, CREATIVE, practical, Socialist, rustic gentleman (58) with 33 acre ruined Herefordshire castle for nature study yearns, younger lady with verve and vivacity for rewarding life together. Ideal for children. Box 1648.

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WARM, SENSITIVE PROF male, young sixties, GSOH, south London, enjoys arts, talking, walking, good food, wine, comfortably tied to recluse, seeks busy woman friend/lover for discreet but worthwhile relationship. Box 2248.

MALE DOCTOR, 53 – slim, attractive, sensual Indian, lives central London – seeks slim sensual older female. Anywhere. Box 2348.

GOOD LOOKING CHAP, tall, kind and sincere, seeks London woman, any age, size colour, to swap bodily fluids safely! Box 2448.

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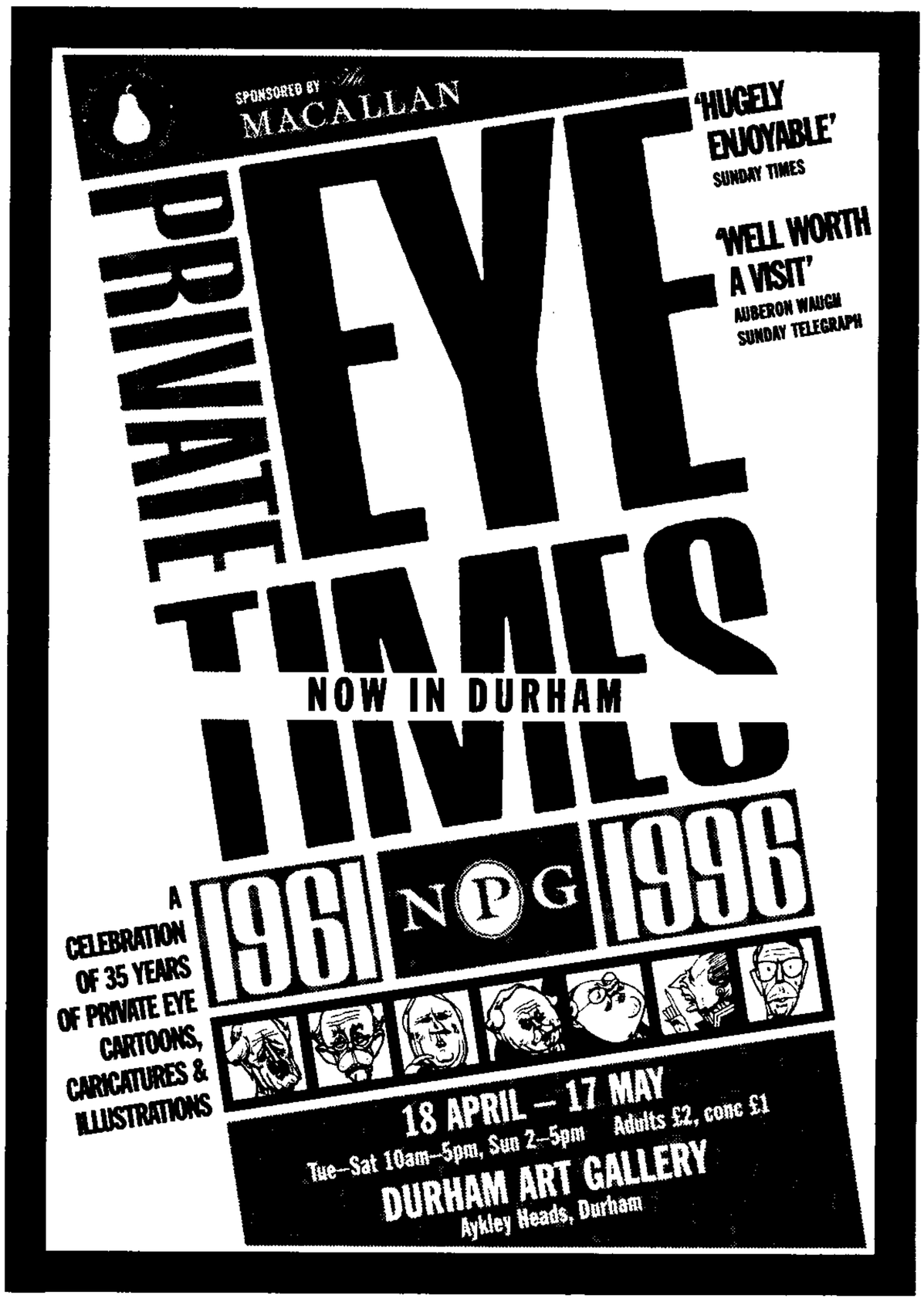

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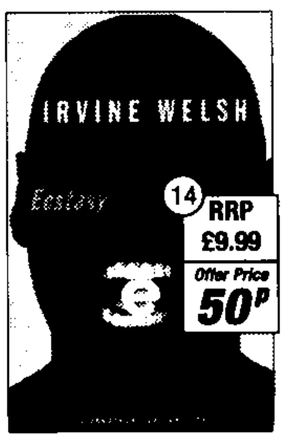

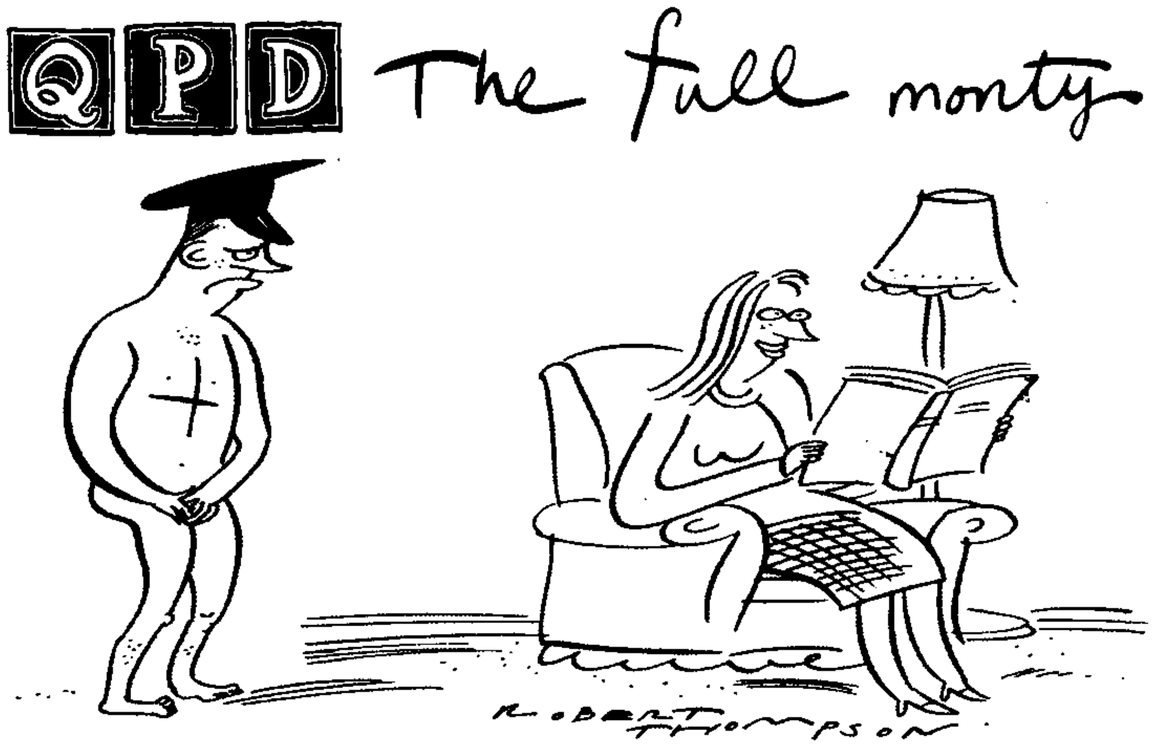

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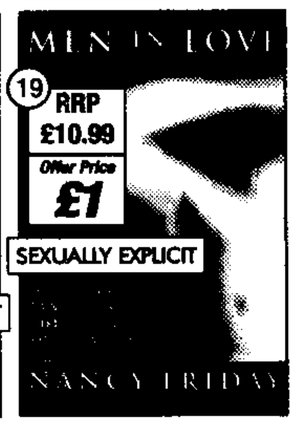

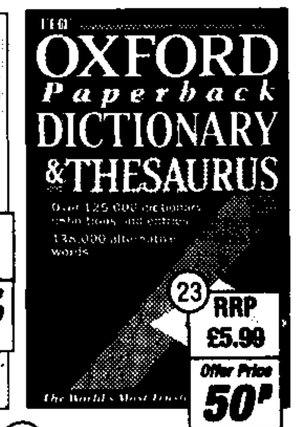

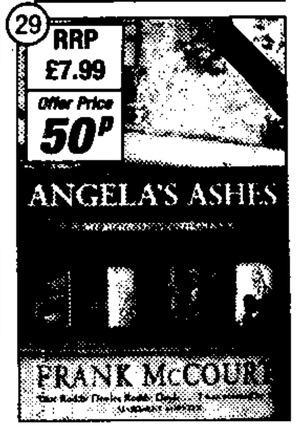

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